

INTIMATE LETTERS ON PERSONAL PROBLEMS

❧ J. R. MILLER. D.D. ❧



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INTIMATE LETTERS ON
PERSONAL PROBLEMS

J. R. MILLER, D.D.

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Review
Miller
BY
J. R. MILLER, D.D.

SELECTED AND ARRANGED BY
' JOHN T. FARIS, D.D. '

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FOREWORD

MANY who have been permitted to read letters written by Dr. Miller to their friends have said hungrily, "If only I might have had such a message!"

The longing is now to be gratified. Among Dr. Miller's papers were more than a score of letter-books in which copies were made of messages to his personal correspondents, known and unknown. These letters have been carefully read, and a selection, made of a varied series, is printed in this volume.

Many of those who are privileged to read these Intimate Letters on Personal Problems will feel that a message is coming to them. The sorrowing will find comfort; doubters will find that faith is strengthened; the soul-hungry will find new glimpses of Christ's beauty; those burdened by care will rejoice in the lightening of their load; and eager pupils in life's school will gladly note the strengthening words of him who learned the secret of helpfulness from the Friend who was his constant Companion.

JOHN T. FARIS.

Philadelphia, May 15, 1914.

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A KNIGHT OF THE GOLDEN PEN

INTIMATE LETTERS ON PERSONAL PROBLEMS

REV. J. R. MILLER, D.D., whom God called to himself July 2, 1912, after a lifetime of ministry to others, was famous not only as author, editor and church builder, but also as a letter writer. And it was by his daily contact with people, in person and through the mails, that he was able to do the work which will make his name live as one who has served his fellows.

For years it was his habit on Sunday evenings, after the day's work was done, to make note of all the people of whom he had heard during the day to whom letters might do good. Of course the names of the sick went down on that list, as well as those who had recovered from sickness, those who had returned from a journey, and those who were about to leave home; those who were going to college, or parents who had heard good news from a son or a daughter at college—in fact, everyone into whose life had come some event of special importance. As soon as possible a letter was sent, with an appropriate word of sympathy, congratulation, cheer, or good wishes.

Then he kept a complete record of all the important dates in the lives of his people—birth-

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days, wedding anniversaries, and so forth—and he marked each of these by sending a short letter of remembrance.

As if this was not enough, when he heard from acquaintances, during the week, of sickness or death in a family with which he was acquainted—whether in his own town or in distant parts of America, or even in foreign countries—he seized the chance to write a letter. In fact, it was the rule of his life to send each day at least one letter of cheer to some one who was in special need. Seldom, however, did he stop with one such letter; the day's mail from his office was frequently loaded with a dozen or more messages of cheer. The chance word with the street-car conductor, or the passenger who sat by his side, or the elevator boy, or the teller at the bank would give him the hint that prompted a message. Perhaps the morning paper would tell him of some one who had been called to a position of honor; possibly a caller would casually mention the fact that a friend had just been married. Notes would be made of each of these opportunities for a helpful letter—and before the day was done the message was on its way.

Once a visitor told Dr. Miller what one of these kindly letters had meant to him. Dr. Miller told the story himself in an article urging others to write such letters. It never oc-

curred to him that friends would know at once that he wrote the letter of which the young man spoke. This is the story, with Dr. Miller's own comment:

“Only yesterday a young man took from his pocket a letter which he had carried for five years and which he had read no doubt hundreds of times. It was written when he was in great perplexity of mind and was on the point of turning into the darkness of doubt and despair. He reached out his hands for help, writing to one he knew he could trust, and laying bare to him his heart's whole burden. He received a prompt answer which, if it did nothing else, at least brought to him the consciousness of human sympathy and interest. He was not alone. One cared for him. For the time, in the darkness, he could not see Christ, but he could see his human friend who stood close by him in love.

“The letter which came to him in answer to his heart's unburdening proved the very word of Christ to him. For months it was all the gospel he could read. Its few strong, simple, confident sentences were like anchor-chains to his soul amid the waves. At last all the darkness fled away, the storms were quieted, Christ himself was revealed once more in blessed, glorious light, and holy peace filled his soul.

“But it was the letter that saved him. It was

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the hand of Christ to him. Is it any wonder that he cherished it as the most sacred of all his treasures? It has been kept so long and read so often that the paper is worn out. But no money would buy it from the young man."

"I can't understand how he could keep in touch with folks as he did," a business man said a few days after the death of the letter writer. "I have, carefully laid away, a package of messages from him. Somehow he kept track of me from the time I took my first position. Every time my salary was increased he wrote to me. There was a letter when I was married, and more letters on wedding anniversaries. When a child was born, when there was sickness in the home, when there were financial reverses, when we were rejoicing or sorrowing for almost any special reason, he wrote to us. And to think that he did no more for us than for thousands of others, some of whom he had never seen."

Dr. Miller wondered how it could be that hundreds of people whose names he had never heard were willing to confide in him and ask his counsel. Once he told his feeling in a letter:

"There is something very sacred in such experiences. One of the most uplifting things possible in human life is to be trusted, especially to have one come with questions and possibly troubles or difficulties, hoping and expecting to

find light, comfort, or help. Nothing else in the world means quite so much to me as the fact that many people do thus put their confidence in me, taking my advice and counsel without question.

When Dr. Miller was asked to write a message as to the privilege of letter-writing, after speaking of the use the art may be to pastors, he said:

“Then others besides pastors may find many opportunities for helpfulness in letter-writing. It wants only an instinct which shall tell always when to write and to whom, and skill to write just the words that are needed, not too few, not too many, and never perfunctory; always from the heart; without cant, yet ever saying something worth while; free from sentimentality, but breathing always the spirit of love; in no case officious or intrusive, but always sympathetic, inspired by the desire to be helpful, full of cheer.

“There is one kind of letters we should never be guilty of writing—letters which would discourage, which would make the heart less brave for its tasks and struggles. It is a sin to be a discourager, yet there are some people who are forever committing this sin. When we write letters we should always have something bright and uplifting to say. If we cannot write in this strain, we should put our letters into

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the wastebasket instead of into the mail box. When we write to those in sorrow, we need not dwell on the sad phases—our friends know these aspects of their trouble well enough already; our letter should rather bring its word of hope, something of God's wonderful comfort. When we send a letter to one who is ill, we are cruel if we say a word to make our friend more conscious of his illness—too much sympathy has precisely and only this effect. It will be far kinder if we try to make our sick friend forget his illness and lift up his heart in hope and song.

“The art of letter-writing ought not to be relegated to any museum of antiquities or buried away among lost arts. It ought to be one of the fine arts of the best Christian modern life. No matter how busy we are, there come moments when the greatest thing we can do is to drop everything else and take time to write a letter to a child, to a young person at the parting of the ways, to one who is in sorrow or in struggle, or to one who is not yet clear as to his duty. It may prove the word in season for the weary.”

Dr. Miller's belief in letter-writing as a helpful art was once shown by this message, sent to a correspondent:

“I am glad that you are able to write letters. You always write cheerfully and inspiringly.

By the way, there is no form of ministry in which a person who is gifted for it can do more good than in letter-writing. Have you seen an account of the newest league—the League of the Golden Pen, I think it is called? It is not a society with officers and enrollments and dues and all that—it is simply a league which a person makes with himself and his fellow members, promising to write at least one letter every month to some person who needs cheer and comfort, strength and help.

“I often think about Paul’s prison life at Rome. When a man is shut away in prison, he is not supposed to have much opportunity of doing good. But Paul seems to have belonged to the League of the Golden Pen. At least we know that he wrote letters to many people. Four of these prison letters at least we have preserved to us in the New Testament. A shut-in who cannot engage in the activities of Christian life, but is able to write letters, can send out continually inspiration and encouragement to those who need these helps. No one knows the full value of such letters—letters written to sick people, to those in sorrow, to those in special joy, to those who are discouraged or depressed, to those who need guidance and counsel.

“The other day a good woman came to my office and showed me a package of letters that

I had written to her during a year or two when she was passing through peculiar experiences—about twenty-five years ago. They were all letters meant to lift her out of her disheartenment, to put new hope in her heart, to show her the reality of God's comfort, and to help her to make the most of her circumstances. She told me how sacredly she had kept those letters, and that she read them over frequently. She told me also how she had used them in helping other people in similar circumstances. The letters have been read and reread until some of them are literally worn out. This was a revelation to me. Of course I knew the value of letter-writing, but I had no thought that twenty-five years after they were written the letters would still be kept and read and reread.

“I am sure you are doing a great deal of good by your letter-writing. If you have not strength to engage in teaching as you used to do, so long as you are able to use your pen as you do now you need not feel that you have no opportunity of being of use any longer. Use your pen and send out every day, or as often as you can, a letter or letters which will carry lessons or impulses to hearts and homes where they are needed. I know enough about your letters to know that they are always bright and cheerful. I think it was Walter Scott who said, at the close of his life, that he did not know

that he ever had written a single word which he could wish to have recalled or blotted out. Not everyone can say this. It seems to me that letters should always be just what yours are—letters which will give a new hope and encouragement.

“One of my little rules is, ‘Never be a discourager.’ The last place I would put discouragement would be in a letter, because when written down it stays there, to give discouragement every time it is read again. Your letters, I am sure, never contain a discouraging word, any sentence that would make life harder for the person to whom you have written, to make the burden heavier, to make the path seem rougher. You always write words which put new courage into hearts, new hope, new joy.

“Go on, my dear friend, in your ministry of letter-writing, and let Christ use your pen in this way for his service. God has given you a big heart, a great fountain of love and sympathy and cheer. Let the streams pour out continually in all directions to bless the world. Hundreds and thousands of persons need encouragement and uplifting. You will scarcely meet one man or one woman in the next ten days whom you cannot make a little stronger or braver by saying the right word.

“I have a habit of writing letters, not only to people in my own parish, or to people with

whom I am personally acquainted, but to other persons in my neighborhood who I hear are in trouble. I do this even to Catholic families sometimes. I never have known of any case in which such a letter was unwelcome. If pastors only understood the value of letters, how much comfort and strength they would give, they would make very much larger use of their pens in this way than they do.”

GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS

PAYING THE DEBT OF LOVE

ONE who is ready to serve others will always have abundant opportunities for such service. Love never gets its debts paid off. You know Paul exhorts us to owe no man anything but love. He implies that we never can pay off all love's debts, or even if we do get them paid off at the close of some happy day, we shall find them waiting at our door in the morning, clamorous as ever. Of course, love is the law of Christian life. We cannot be Christlike unless we do love. But oh! is not love tremendously costly sometimes? I preached last evening to the young people on the kind of friend they should take into their lives. Among other things I spoke of the fact that in engaging to be one's friend we do not know what our engagement means, what we covenant to do, what burdens to carry, what sufferings to endure, what patience may be required of us, what toil and care and bearing of loads. Nevertheless, love must never flinch from paying the full price. I know that often people assert very strong friendship for others and are sincere enough in their hearts at the time. But I have oftentimes seen these persons, when the demand for service came, flinch, unable to measure up to the standard of their own engagements.

Yet do not understand that I am complaining. There is no other life like that of love. Nothing brings us so much happiness as living for others, giving out our lives in sweet helpfulness, whatever the cost may be. So I congratulate you on the opportunity you are having for self-denial and costly serving of others. You remember Jesus said that he who saveth his life loseth it, while he who loses his life for the Master's sake saves it. That is, the only way to save our lives, to make them grow into beauty, to reach up into strength, is to give them out, empty them, to sacrifice them in whatever ways we may be called upon to do. He that flinches at calls for self-denial, he that withdraws himself and holds back his life from pain and cost at love's demands, is losing that which he thinks he is saving.

I am sure that God will answer your prayers, making you brave and keeping you sweet and patient in all the experiences through which you are called to pass. The Master never leads us anywhere without making provision for us. He never asks us to do impossibilities. Of course, he asks us to do many things that seem to us to be impossibilities—that would be, to human strength unhelped. But even these hardest things become easy when we meet them in Christ's name, with his hand upon our heads, with his strength in our hearts. You remember

Augustine's prayer which he used to make so often, "Command what thou wilt, and give what thou commandest." We need not fear any commands which God gives to us, nor shrink from any duties which he assigns to us, because we know that whenever he does thus lay upon us burdens too heavy for us to bear with our own feeble strength he always means to give us what we need. I like Paul's words, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Regarding your share in the happiness of others in their wedded lives, I understand your feeling. But, my dear child, the sweetest happiness which we can get in the world comes from adding a little to the happiness of others. I know it is not easy when the hungry heart cries out for bread to see others eating to the full, when we cannot ourselves have even a crumb for our own hunger. But, after all, we do get many crumbs—indeed, the best bread is the bread from heaven, the bread of Christ's love. Enter more and more deeply and fully into the love of Christ, and let that love fill your heart. I believe that God does not require us to crush or destroy anything in us that he has created. Buddha's theory of life is that happiness will be reached by destroying the appetites and desires. Christ's theory is that happiness comes in the satisfaction of these de-

sires and yearnings, not, of course, in lower ways, but in the higher ways. If the Master has denied to you the earthly satisfaction your heart craves so ardently, be sure that he means you to find that satisfaction in the higher things. Open your heart to the divine love. Spread your sails and catch the upper currents.

The secret of a beautiful life always is, living in unbroken fellowship with Christ, under the influence of his presence and the inspiration of his love and grace. If we could get this same realization of the divine presence into our life it would mean everything to us. You remember that phrase that is quoted so often in these days—"practicing the presence of God." We all say we believe that God is with us all the time, that Christ is ever by our side, closer than the nearest friend. Let us practice this faith. Let us act as if it were true. This is a wonderful lesson if we can learn it. I give it to you to-day, hoping that it may have its help and blessing for you in your own life.

DOING ONE'S BEST

I REJOICE with you in the success you are having not only in your work, but personally. Evidently you have become the center of a good influence which is reaching

out and touching many other lives. I said last Sunday in speaking of work that we are not first to be carpenters or doctors or artists or lawyers, but are, first of all, to be Christians. Whatever we do in our ordinary secular work, if that is all there is of us, we are failing of our best. The life in us should pour out through our vocation, through all our ordinary work, and like fragrance, like the light, to bless the world. That is what you are doing. You are an artist and a teacher of art—but you are also far more. You are a Christian woman, with a heart full of love for Christ, which is always pouring out its gentle influences, touching the lives of others, sweetening homes, warming hearts, and inspiring people to live better, more beautifully, more worthily, more helpfully.

This is my little sermon for you this month. It is not a sermon, but a bit of encouragement. But I believe that encouragement is very often the best that we can give to our friends. I am sure that encouragement is far better for a boy than nagging—probably for a girl, too. Even some good fathers and mothers seem in their family discipline and in the exercise of their love for their children never to get any further than “don’t.” The other day I read about a mother who called out to one of her daughters and said, “Where’s Johnny?” “I don’t know,” was the answer. “What is he

doing?" "I don't know," was again the answer of the sister. "Well, go and find him, and whatever he is doing tell him to stop doing it."

I am interested very much in what you say about your "bird-man." There are some men who seem to have a genius for nature. Birds and animals of all kinds seem to know them and form friendships with them. There are men who stay about our parks, only loafers or tramps, perhaps, but with whom the little animals are as familiar as a child would be with its own mother. Everyone has his own particular place in the world, and it may be that some of those we think of as entirely useless people are really doing a good deal more for the blessing of the world than we imagine.

The last page of your letter amuses me. You say that you have sometimes felt quite like giving up your art, Sunday-school work and everything else. If this really is an accurate statement of your condition at any time in your life, it must be when you are very much exhausted, or when you have eaten something for your supper which you ought not to have eaten. A great many of our unhappy moods are the result of careless or indiscreet living. If people would only learn not to overeat, not to eat when they should not eat, not to eat what they should not eat, and always to eat sparingly and abstemiously, they would be a great deal

better Christians and a great deal happier and would do very much more work.

STUMBLINGBLOCKS

THERE are several ways that people may put stumblingblocks in the way of others. A stumblingblock is something lying in the path over which the unwary pedestrian falls. Applied in a moral or spiritual sense it means anything which interferes with the earnest, straightforward and happy Christian life of others. I suppose the thought usually in mind is: anything that influences another to be less faithful in duty, or which makes it harder for another person to live a Christian life.

As you suggest, we can put stumblingblocks in the way of others by inconsistencies in our own life. For example, if parents are not faithful as Christians, do things they ought not to do, or leave undone things they ought to do, they are apt to hurt the lives of their children who are growing up under their influence. The very best instruction, the most faithful teaching, will not avail if the life of the parent or teacher does not, at least in very large measure, corroborate and confirm the lessons.

The application may be made to all Christian people in the community. We are the representatives of Christ. The world does not see Christ—does not read the Bible very much, and, therefore, does not know just what it is that Christ requires. We are required to live so that in our lives the world may learn what Christ is. If we stumble, therefore—that is, if we do not live as we should do—we hurt the cause of Christ in those who are watching us, and, besides, do harm to those who, probably, if our example were different, might be led to follow Christ themselves.

I think you have heard me tell this incident of Miss Havergal. Just after having been confirmed in an Episcopal church she went to a large girls' school, with a heart full of love for the Saviour, and with a mind intent upon faithfully witnessing for him. But she was startled to learn that she was the only Christian in all the hundred girls in the institution. All the rest were worldly, society girls, with no thought of Christ. Her first feeling was that she could not confess Christ among those girls. Her second and better thought, however, was that she could not but confess him. "I am the only one Christ has in this school," she said. This made her very strong, and, sustained by the grace of Christ, she went on quietly confessing her Saviour in all her dis-

position and life, as well as by her words, deeply influencing in time all the school. If she, being the only Christian in the school, had lived carelessly, as so many girls do when they are away from home, she would have been a stumblingblock in the way of the others.

There are other ways in which we may become stumblingblocks. I suppose whatever in us, whether in act or word, discourages another, makes life harder for another, puts a stumblingblock in the other's way. It seems to me we should all live so as to be helpful to others in every possible way. If one of our friends is carrying a heavy burden, and we say something which discourages him, or makes it harder for him to walk with his heavy load on his shoulder, is not that a stumblingblock cast in his way? So unkindnesses to others make stumblingblocks. Whatever in us, in our acts, or in our words, makes it harder for other people to live is a stumblingblock which we cast in their way.

I am very glad indeed to learn what you say about your friend who has come into your life, and with whom you are enjoying such pleasant intercourse. Evidently your prayer has been answered. You will be very helpful to each other, the one encouraging the other. No privilege is sweeter than that of kneeling, side by side, with one whom we love, and praying to-

gether for each other and for our families and friends and for our church and for the interests of God's kingdom. I am very glad indeed that God has heard your prayer and has brought you two together in such pleasant and cordial relations. You remember there is a special promise which says, "If two of you shall agree"—so you see this gives you added power in prayer. If you two agree to ask God for anything, the promise is doubly strong that he will grant your request.

THE LESSON OF SELF-CONTROL

THE lesson of self-control which you are trying to learn is never an easy one. In fact, it is the great lesson of life. It is a lesson we should always try to learn. Nothing can make one more weak, or put one more in peril at every point than the lack of self-control. These runaway tongues of ours are worse than wild horses when they get started. You remember what James says about the tongue in his little Epistle. He makes it out to be a very unruly member indeed, full of fearful power to hurt others. I need not, however, dilate upon this, nor write an essay upon the sins of the tongue. What I want to say is that you must not be discouraged because you have not yet succeeded in learning to control your-

self. You remember the old song, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." This is a teaching which we should always keep with us. However often we may fail, we should start over again, determined to master. Conquest is very slow and it takes a long time to get the mastery. We have recently had in our Sunday-school lessons the story of Moses. After forty years in Egypt, when he had had the best training that any man could get, he showed himself utterly incapable of self-government. His quick temper and rashness got him into trouble, for he killed an Egyptian in his anger. He was then compelled to flee away from Egypt, sacrificing everything he had toiled for all these forty years. This suggests the terrible harm the lack of self-control sometimes does one. It costs tremendously. But you remember also that God took Moses in charge then and kept him for forty years in the wilderness as a shepherd with a flock of sheep. During those forty years Moses learned self-control and came back at eighty years of age and led his people out of Egypt. During forty years more of the most terrible trials any man ever had Moses never once lost his temper until near the very close of the period, when again, in a sore trial, he did lose control of himself and spoke unadvisedly.

What I want to show to you is that even great

men, like Moses, have found long and sore discipline necessary, before they could learn the lesson which you say you have not yet learned.

There is one little sentence, however, in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews which gives the secret of Moses' victory over himself. It says, "He endured, as seeing him who is invisible." That is, Moses always remembered that God was right beside him, his friend to help him, and this made him strong. He did not see God—no one ever saw God; but it was as if he saw him. That is, he realized the divine presence in all his life and learned his lessons under this blessed influence.

If you saw Christ standing beside you all the time it would not be hard for you to keep sweet, to keep control of temper and speech. Now Christ is beside you just as really as he was beside Mary when she sat at his feet in Bethany, or beside Peter and the other disciples as they walked together over the hills of Judea and Galilee. What you want is to realize this fact. We know that God is present with us all the time, at every moment, by day or by night. He is closer than any human friend can be to us. Indeed, we are to practice this presence—that is, we are to live all the time as if we actually saw him.

I have said enough to help you in this direction. Think it out for yourself. If you re-

member always that Christ is by you, not only to see you, but to help you, as your truest and best Friend, you will soon get the mastery.

ENTERING INTO THE LIVES OF OTHERS

I HAVE no doubt that you were wisely guided in your decision to resign your teaching work for next year. I think you need a time of freedom from such a strain as teaching necessarily involves. These months of rest, with no tasks to think of, will give you the opportunity to build up the wasted tissue and get strong again. Teaching is never easy. The fact that you have to be on hand every morning at nine o'clock and go by a schedule through all the school hours of the day, day after day, week after week, month after month, makes a pressure upon nerve and brain which cannot but be exhausting. People often talk about the easy time teachers have, with only five or six hours a day of work, and only five days in the week, with only ten months in the year—but the teacher who is conscientious, as you are, and does her work well, preparing for it carefully and minutely, then carrying her pupils on her heart all the time in loving interest, almost as tender as a mother's—draws heavily upon her resources. Some people teach with-

out much outlay of emotion, because they teach mechanically, not really loving their pupils or taking any responsibility beyond the faithful performance of the classroom duties. But that is not the kind of teacher you are. You put your whole heart into your work in such a way that when the day is done you are exhausted. I am glad therefore that you can have a year of rest.

I am sorry that you have had a little extra burden to carry at home. I suppose a person with your warm heart cannot help entering into the lives of one's own in such a way as to suffer vicariously as you are doing. ✓I have been trying for a good while to teach my people, however, that all they can do for their friends, even their closest and dearest friends, is to keep them bound by prayer fast around the feet of God with chains of gold. Sometimes we can speak to our friends who are not doing quite right and by loving exhortation help them out of their danger, but very often such efforts only do harm and not good. I think even many mothers do a good deal too much talking to their children in the way of reproof or correction.

Take a case in point. There is a young man in whom I am very deeply interested, whose life I have been watching very closely for several years. He is married and has a little fam-

ily. Three or four months ago his wife came to me and told me in perfect confidence of his yielding to certain temptations, and asked me to talk with him. I told her very frankly that we would have to be exceedingly careful if we were to help him and save him. I promised her to do all I could but begged her not to say much herself, but to pray a great deal, assuring her that I would pray too, and if the opportunity came would speak to him. The opportunity has not come yet, and perhaps it may never come. But I have been praying a great deal and his wife has been praying too—and we have prayed together several times for him. Last Sunday the wife slipped a note in my hand as she went out of the church door telling me that she believed the danger was all past. The comfort is that God has heard the prayers and touched the man's heart. I have sought meanwhile to interest him in certain lines of church work. I have also cautiously asked some of the men to interest themselves in him, but I have not said a word to him.

I merely refer to this incident to tell you that I believe, after a good many years of experimenting in the Master's work, that we can do most for people in their times of danger indirectly and by prayer. I do not know what the particular danger is in your sister's case, but God knows and you can talk to him very

frankly, telling him your perplexity, and asking him to do the thing that is best.

Individuality is most sacred. We cannot touch another person's life without the other person's consent. We cannot force even our love upon people, nor compel them to do what is right. All we can do, all that even a parent can do for a child, is to use our influence and let God do the rest. The moment we try to use any compulsion or to urge a person in any way but through the conscience and heart, we are violating the sanctity of personality and also endangering the life.

Did you ever try to open a rose a day or two before its natural time for opening? If you did, you know that it would have been better if you had waited a day or two and let the rose open in its own way, under the influence of the sun and the dew.

You ask me if I have any idea as to what God is trying to do with you. Indeed I have not, but my comfort is that God himself has a very distinct idea of what he is going to do with you. I think you have a book of mine in which there is an article called, "God's Slow Making of Us."¹ If so, it may have a suggestion or two in answer to your question. It is a great comfort to you to know that God is not hacking away at the block of marble without any

¹ "Upper Currents."

thought of what he is going to make. Even a common sculptor has something in his mind, if not fashioned in clay, of what he means to hew the marble into, and I am sure God never begins work on the human mind without an ideal. The Germans say, "Every man's life is a plan of God." The thought is very beautiful and is also true. In the experiences through which we pass, we know that there is an eye watching, and a wisdom overruling, and that all things are so directed that in the end God's ideal for our lives shall be realized.

BLESSED—OR BEING A BLESSING

I AM glad to know of the encouragement you have at college in your Young Women's Christian Association work. I am glad to know you are so happy in your work. My heart goes out to you continually in affectionate interest, and in longing that you may be blessed and be a blessing. These two phases of life should always go together—indeed, they cannot well be separated. If we are blessed we ought to be and cannot help being a blessing. There are two ranges of windows in every life—one range toward God and one toward the world. We should keep both open all the while. We should keep every window

open toward God, that we may receive continually the blessings which he would send to us from heaven. Nothing is sadder than to have one's windows toward heaven closed, so that when the benedictions are sent to us from the blue sky, or, rather, from God's heart, they find no entrance. This is the way too many people live. They leave God out altogether. They have no windows open toward heaven. The benedictions fall upon them but find no admittance, and they remain unblessed. But you always keep the windows open, every window, and God is pouring into your heart continually the richest blessings of his love.

Then the windows on the other side should also be kept open toward the world. That is the way God wants us to live. He does not give us blessings to keep for ourselves. Indeed, nothing becomes our own really and truly until we have passed it on, until we have given it to some other one. Things we keep for ourselves only spoil in our hands and in our hearts, and nothing good comes of them. It is only when we give out again to others what God gives us that we are blessed. This is the way you are living too. You keep your heart open toward your girls all the while, and everything God gives to you you pass to them. Your letter is full of this thought—the eagerness of your heart to be a blessing to those among whom

you are laboring. It is my most earnest prayer that God will enrich you in all ways, in your own life, through your own experiences, that you may be truly a blessing to all about you. You need not have any fear that the girls will not come to you. As I have said to you before, I believe one of the dangers of Christian workers is a little overeagerness, that is, a desire which finds expression a little too evidently, to help others. This has always been one of my own dangers. In my earnest desire to be of use I have sometimes frightened persons away, or, at least, have made them a little shy. As a rule, we help people best when they do not know we are helping them. At least, we find quickest and closest access to them when we do not show that we are eager and desirous to do them good. Not many people really care about being helped in a set and purposed way. I am satisfied that the best work of our life is done when we restrain our desire and hold our eagerness in reserve. You know how it destroys a rose to try to open it before it opens naturally. The same is true of human lives. We must not open them—God must do that, and all we can do is to wait until they open naturally.

I am sure that a great many pastors and workers in various lines of Christian service need to learn this lesson. Sometimes we have

to wait for a long time before the occasion comes when we can really give a person the blessing, the comfort, the help, the inspiration, which we wish to give him. You must not fear, therefore, that you cannot find access to the girls. You love them and you are praying for them continually. One by one, when the time is ripe, they will come to you and you will have the opportunity of saying to them the word it is in your heart to say, and doing for them the kindness that you wish to do, or giving them the help or the blessing which you are so eager to give unto them. You want God to send them to you, and he will.

HELPING OTHERS

YOUR work seems to have been increasing since I saw you. I suppose there is some compensation in the extra money it brings in, especially as you told me you were living on a pretty close margin with your present income. I wish there were some way to make your regular income larger, so that you would have no such anxiety about making ends meet. I trust that something better will come by and by—that you will be able to live without so much care.

You speak about some people being hard to

help. I suppose this comes from two things—first, because life yields very slowly to deep and permanent impressions, especially good and uplifting impressions; secondly, because we cannot always tell when we are helping people the most and in the best way.

There is no doubt that influences toward evil are much more apt to make instant impression than influences toward good. There certainly is something in our nature which causes us to gravitate naturally downward, toward things that are less beautiful. I remember a prayer of Fenelon's: "Lord, take me, for I cannot give myself to thee. And when thou hast me keep me, for I cannot keep myself. And save me in spite of myself, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen." I suppose this prayer voices the experience of almost anyone who is sincere and thoughtful and truly striving toward the best things. We all understand this inward tendency toward things that are not beautiful and good. The way toward heaven is always upward, and means climbing. You remember that a ladder was Jacob's vision of life. What we find to be true in ourselves in our efforts to reach better things is also true of others whom we desire to help. There is something in them, too, as well as in us, which resists good impressions. Therefore, it is hard for us to do them good in moral and spiritual ways.

On the other hand, we cannot tell really when we are doing good, or making impressions. Oft-times we think we are not affecting the persons at all by what we say or do, while really we are putting into their hearts impulses, inspirations, which will ultimately come to full fruitage in blessing and good. I think that nothing good is ever really lost. The good words we speak and the good things we do as we go along through life may seem to have no effect; but the good seed is not lost, even though it does not grow in the hearts in which we seek to plant it. You know what Charles Kingsley says about the seed that falls by the wayside and is picked up by the birds—that, though the birds get it, yet the birds are fed. That is, if your efforts do not do just that which you hoped they would do, help the person you want to help, yet the good, itself, is not lost, but touches some other person's life with benediction and beauty.

The last verse of the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians has always been a wonderful comfort to me—"Your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Paul had spoken, throughout the chapter, of resurrection and the immortal life and this thought in the close of the wonderful passage suggests to us that everything we do lays hold upon infinity and eternity. It will go on forever. Even if the good effort seems to fail to-day and to-morrow, and unto the end

of our life, still it has eternity to work in, and sometime, somewhere, in some way, it will be a blessing.

TALKING ABOUT ONESELF

YOU certainly have misunderstood the chapter in one of my books,¹ to which you refer, about "Talking of One-self." The persons I refer to in the article are those who talk to everybody about themselves and about nothing else. Only two or three days since I had a call from such a person—indeed, I see the person quite often. He will talk about nothing else but himself. He is a clergyman, and, of course, a very great man, and, no doubt, there is a great deal to talk about. But from the time when he comes in until he goes out there is no chance for even a mere suggestion concerning anything else than the speaker himself. They said that Lord Macaulay, while the greatest speaker England ever knew, could in no possible sense be called a conversationalist. He never gave the other man a chance for a word. But the beauty of Macaulay, however, was that he did not talk about himself, but about the great themes that filled his mind. A lady told me last summer about her pastor.

¹ "Things to Live For."

She said that he called at her home one afternoon about two o'clock. She had a number of engagements for the afternoon, and was very impatient to get away. But the pastor began to talk, not about himself, but about the things that lay nearest his heart, and never left the house until a quarter past six—when her tea bell rang and gave him an intimation that he would better be going.

The visitor to whom I referred before is not this sort of man. He talks about himself, his own work, what he has been doing, what people say about him, the great achievements he has made, and all such matters. He has only one virtue—he is not a morbid, retrospective person, does not talk about his ailments, his sufferings, his personal troubles, but about his greatness, his wisdom, his high attainments, and so forth.

But let me say to you in a word that I believe most sincerely in talking about oneself as you do. A great many people are the same way. They never talk about themselves to people in general. Those who see them every day would not know they ever had a care or a pain or suffered in any way. But they need some person, a sort of priest, to whom they can unburden themselves, just as a sick patient does to a physician. You might just as well say that it is not right for you to tell your physician

all about your disease, as to say that you should not tell all your spiritual experiences and spiritual needs to one who may be able to help you. I am sure you do not talk about your physical condition in detail to anybody but your physician.

Have you ever thought that the way Christ nearly always helps people is through human friends? He does not come himself in person, in bodily presence. Ordinarily he sends some one, because we cannot, in our human condition, receive spiritual help directly—we need a mediator. My work as a Christian teacher and a Christian minister is to represent Christ, to interpret Christ, not only in my words, but in my life. Some person longs to know a little about the love of Christ and Christ sends him to me. Some man is struggling with terrible temptation. He must have the human touch, the clasp of the human hand, the encouragement of the human voice, the beating of the human heart; so Christ sends him to me that I may show him a little at least of the divine compassion, the divine affection, the divine sympathy, a little of the divine encouragement. Just so far as I represent Christ truly do I become a real help to those who need me.

I think you understand now just what I mean by the article to which you refer. I am sure you understand that I do not have any refer-

ence at all to such revealings of oneself as you have made to me when you wished to have my help.

You probably know some people of the kind I referred to in the article. I know some people that I never dare ask when I meet them, "How are you to-day?" If I put the greeting in that form I am sure to get a long narrative of sufferings, pains, bad colds, restless nights, dreary days, and a hundred other things which belong to the list of human ills. I have one man in mind now whom I always very carefully greet with a simple "Good morning," not giving him any chance to speak of his condition. Then when he begins his list of ailments I try by some cheerful word to divert his mind from its sad strain into a more cheerful and happy mood.

I mortally offended a young woman who came to me the other day with a long and sad story. The case was a sad one—a home with feeble parents, money all gone, and pinching want facing the family. I took the matter up at once in a very practical way, trying to find something for the girl to do—that is what she came to me for. Then, having done this, I merely said to her: "Now, my child, try to be brave and cheerful. Do your duty and trust God, and he will take care of you." She wrote the same night a long letter, telling me that I had

hurt her very sorely by not showing her any sympathy. She said that when she told me her troubles, instead of sympathizing with her, I merely said, "Be brave, my child." She wanted to have condolence of a kind which I never give to any person. You know enough about me to know that my aim is never to make people's burdens heavier by talking about them, and dwelling upon their sad features, but to put cheer and encouragement into their hearts, so that they can rise up in new strength and go bravely on in their allotted experiences. This is the true secret of the art of being a comforter. The word "comfort" means to strengthen, and the true comforter is the one who tries to make others stronger. If I can take away the trouble, of course it may be better for me to do it. Ordinarily we cannot lessen the burden, and all we can do is to make the burden bearer a little stronger to go on keeping his load.

What I want to say to you is that the truest friend is not the one who sits down beside you and goes over the painful experiences of your life with you in detail, merely for the sake of showing sympathy, but the one who, having listened sympathetically and lovingly to the recital of your sufferings or your pain, then begins to be a healer, a physician.

THE ANXIETIES OF THE TOILER

HOW TO GLORIFY TASKWORK

EVIDENTLY you are a busy person. Some one says that one's value in society is measured by one's interruptions—that is, by the demands which other people make upon one for help, for service. Evidently many persons make demands upon you, many claim you and the loving help which you can give. All this speaks of your own good heart. I believe that God intrusts to his servants the work which he knows by experience they will do faithfully. Some people are selfish and unwilling to serve others; these are not apt to get many opportunities of serving others in the true sense. But when one has proved willing to serve and give out life for others, then God is ready to give more and more, until hands and hearts are full.

Long since I learned that interruptions—what people call interruptions, the breaking into one's own schedule of needs and wants from others—are often bits of God's will which are given to us to do. For example, one makes a program for a day, enough to fill every moment of it, but scarcely has the day begun when some one comes with a need, a sorrow, something that seems to demand that we should

stop our regular work and turn aside. We are apt to chafe at these interruptions, but I believe that often the things which thus press in upon us, breaking into our own plans, are the most sacred things of our days. I have no doubt that you regard your life as Christ's, to be used in whatever way he would have you to use it. Your motto is, at least in substance, "Whose I am, and whom I serve." By going about from place to place among your friends, helping them in Christ's name, you bring to them the Spirit of Christ and the love of Christ and also the helpfulness of Christ. I trust that you will have rich enjoyment in all this service, and that you will always be found helping somebody.

This reminds me of something I have read about Sir Bartle Frere. He was always serving in some way. He had been absent for quite a while in one of his African explorations, and was to return by a certain train. Lady Frere sent a servant to meet him at the station. The servant was new and never had seen Sir Bartle. He asked his mistress how he would know him. "Oh," said she, "look for a tall man helping somebody." The servant went to the station, and when the train arrived he eagerly watched for his new master, trying to identify him by his wife's description. Soon he saw a tall man helping an old lady out of a railway

carriage, and knew at once that it must be the person he sought. It is a very beautiful way to be known—one who is always helping some person. I am sure this applies to you. When I go to your country and try to find you I shall be sure to find you trying to help somebody.

I am sure that as you turn your thought toward the higher phase of taskwork, all that now seems drudgery will become beautiful and radiant service. Anything that we do for Christ, if we can realize indeed that it is for him, ceases to be dreary and toilsome, and becomes a matter of joy and gladness. May God help you more and more to set Christ before you always in everything you do, and to work always for him, no matter for whom you are working directly, or what lowly and dreary work you are doing.

Did I ever tell you the story which Mrs. Preston has woven into one of her little poems? It tells of two children—an older and younger sister. The younger one was sickly, perhaps lame and helpless. When the mother died she committed the care of this little child to her older sister, herself not much more than a child. All her time was taken up in caring for the little home and watching over this lame sister. One day she heard a sermon in which the minister urged that everyone should do something for Christ, the King. He put it too

strongly, in such a way as to leave a wrong impression on the child's mind. She began to fret because she was so occupied with the care of her little sister and the duties of the home that she had no time to spend, not even a minute, in working for Christ. One day, when she sat beside the bed where the sick child lay, she dreamed that the King had come, and that she had told him how sorry she was that she could not do anything for him; that while her heart was full of love for him, and while she wished she might be of use, all her time was taken up with this suffering child. The King, looking into her face, said, "But the child is mine."

You see the teaching at once. The girl's whole time was taken up, absorbed even to the last particle of strength, in caring for her little sister. She thought that she was not doing anything for Christ, and only gave as her reason that all her time was taken up. But the fact that the child herself belonged to Christ changed everything—all the beautiful service she was rendering was done really for Christ since the child was his, and, in caring for her, she was serving him most acceptably and beautifully. This is but another little glimpse into the same truth which I tried to show you. In caring for the children in your school, devoting yourself to them, even if your time is so occupied that you can do nothing directly for Christ

in working for his Church, yet the children are his, and all you do for them is done really for him.

You must not be discouraged about your work. As I have said to you before, you are a learner, and the mistakes which you say you are still making in your work, and the imperfections which you still find in what you do, are merely incidents in the growth of your life and in your progress toward better things.

TO ONE WHO WAS DISAPPOINTED IN SEEKING A CHANGE OF POSITION

I HOPE that you will have a good year in the office. I have not forgotten your desire to get something else, but it seems as if God wanted you to stay where you are, at least for the present. I believe that when we are doing our duty faithfully as it comes to us, day by day, and are living in free and familiar intercourse with Christ, telling him our wishes and our desires, from day to day, we are always divinely led. It is right for us to ask God to give us a different position, in a more congenial place, where the work is more to our taste, or easier, or more fruitful, or more agreeable, but, if after we have made such request the Master still lets us stay where we

are, I suppose we should accept his providential leading as an answer to our prayers. Or, rather, we should believe that he still has work for us in the place where we now are. I have had so many very striking and remarkable illustrations of the divine guidance in cases like yours that I have learned to have an implicit confidence in God's providence. Of course, the Bible teaches me that his providence is always right, but the experiences which I have had with people, as well as with myself, have given me such practical illustrations of this truth, that what the Bible states as true I have had proved to me over and over again to be indeed true. If you are still kept in the office where you now are during the coming winter, I think you may say that Christ has something for you to do there, something which would suffer if you would go away, something which no other one could do so well as you can.

Then I have no doubt that part of the answer to your prayer comes in the blessing to yourself. We do not always get our best lessons when we have our own way—we learn many of these golden lessons when we are compelled to take another way than our own. The lesson of submission to God, of beautiful confidence in God's way, is certainly a very precious one. It is wonderful to think that God has a plan for our lives. If we believe this I

am sure it is a high honor for us to try to fulfill His plan.

“This thing on which thy heart was set, this thing that cannot be,
This weary, disappointing day, that dawns, my friend, for thee:—
Be comforted; God knoweth best, the God whose name is Love,
Whose tender care is evermore our passing lives above.
He sends thee disappointment? Well, then take it from his hand.
Shall God’s appointment seem less good than what thyself had planned?”

Excuse my rambling on in this preachy way. I hope that you will be very happy and very strong. May God bless you in all your good work.

TO A DISCOURAGED TEACHER

I AM sorry that you did not get the little objectionable feature eliminated from the school board’s record. But it is all over now, and you must not mind it. It will never be heard of outside of the board, and, if it should be, it will not do you any harm. I have learned long since that, when a person’s life is right, the little annoyances that come from other people do one no harm, and the wrongs done by others, if let alone, if left in God’s hands, bring

only good and blessing in the end to the one who suffers. This is the lesson I tried to teach you, you remember, when you were here. It is true, part of God's own word.

What I want to help you to do now, my child, is to lay the matter out of your own hands into God's hands and give it no thought. Forget it, let Christ take care of it, and you will never hear of it again excepting in the way of blessing and good. It is said that one day Ruskin was talking with a friend who picked up a beautiful and costly embroidered handkerchief which had a great ink spot at the center of it. The lady was very much vexed and annoyed at the carelessness of the person who had thus spoiled the handkerchief. She said to Mr. Ruskin that it was a present from some dear friend and would never be of any use to her any more. Mr. Ruskin said nothing, but quietly put the handkerchief in his pocket. Some days after, he called on his friend and handed her the handkerchief, and, lo! he had put on it in India ink a beautiful drawing, using the ink blot at the center as the basis of the ornamentation. The effect was exquisite and the lady expressed her surprise in unmeasured terms.

That is the way God does with the things that touch our lives, if only we leave them in his hands. He uses the very wrong that has been done to us, the very injustice or injury,

as the basis of something very good and very beautiful which he brings into our lives. All I want you to do is to put this matter entirely out of your own hands. Do not talk about it to anybody. Do not allow yourself to think about it. In a little prayer commit it all to your Master. Some day you will find that good, and not evil, has come out of it. But if you take the matter into your own hands and try to right your own wrong and undo what others have done to you, you will lose what otherwise Christ wants to do for you.

Now hold up your head and sing and rejoice. You are leaving behind six years of beautiful work. You have touched the hearts of hundreds of children during these years and left impressions upon their lives which they will carry into the immortal years. A teacher's work is not seen at once—it is done in invisible ink which will not appear for a while. But everything beautiful that you have done, everything good, everything worthy, will stay, and some day appear in life as character. You remember Longfellow's little fancy about the song which he sang into the air, which fell to the earth, he knew not where—and how he found it, long, long afterwards, from beginning to end, in the heart of a friend. Thus it will be that the good work you have done as a teacher will stay in the world. You do not know where it

has gone—you cannot trace it now—but some day it will all reappear. Besides, you have a clear conscience, for you know that you have done your duty faithfully. Finish up your work here beautifully. Let nothing that has happened in any way mar the sweetness of your closing days at the school. Be as happy as a bird. Let your love flow out toward your pupils and fellow teachers and friends. Make the last days the best of all days. Then you will carry away sweet memories which even the unhappy circumstance of the school board will not mar.

The next thing will be to face your last year in the university. It will be a good year, I have no doubt, the best year of all your course. The time that has elapsed since you finished up your junior year has been filled with experiences which will make the senior year mean all the more to you.

CARRY AN OIL CAN

IT certainly has been a comfort to me to know that this year has been a little easier for you because of the slight help which I have been able to give you. I want always to stay in your life and to be to you a true friend, helping you over any hard place, giving

you a little encouragement and strength when the burdens are heavy.

Referring to your position, the more fully you can forget the unpleasant features of your environment and live without being self-conscious regarding them, the better it will be for you. It seems to me that we may learn to cast all these things upon God, asking him to take them and make them work together for good. I have learned this lesson so completely that I chide myself if I ever find that I am worrying about anything in my affairs or in the affairs of others in which I am concerned. Of course, I must do my part always, my duty, the bit of God's will that comes to me moment by moment; but all the rest I must put into the hands of God, all the tangles, the perplexities, the unpleasant things, the hurts which are given by others, knowing that he will take them and out of them will make something good. This is a wonderful comfort, and it strengthens one's mind immeasurably to know it.

I am sure that you have learned the lesson yourself in a great measure, but perhaps in the matter to which you refer with regard to the superintendent, you may yet carry the lesson a little farther. Try it at least. Each morning lay all in God's hands. Do nothing which would seem to intensify the trouble. Keep near Christ and ask him to guide you

at all times, and to bless you in all your associations and fellowships. Then let him take care of the unpleasant things.

There is a good illustration in one of Dr. Parkhurst's books. He tells of a workman who was in a trolley car one day. As the door was opened and shut it squeaked. The workman quietly got up and, taking a little can from his pocket, dropped some oil upon the offending spot, saying as he sat down, "I always carry an oil can in my pocket, for there are so many squeaky things in this world that a little oil will help." Dr. Parkhurst applies this to life, saying that love is an anti-irritant, that we can soften a great many attacks and prevent a great many unpleasant frictions if we always have love and will speak the gentle word, the soft word, the kindly word, at the right time. I used the illustration recently in my church in a sermon, and suggested to the people that they all carry oil cans, thus trying to make the world a little sweeter place to live in.

May God bless you in all your life and make you very happy.

WHAT DUTY COMES FIRST?

LET me answer at once one of the points in your letter by saying that I have no question whatever about duty when it comes between one's daily occupation and what

may seem to be religious tasks. Our first work is the work which comes to us in our ordinary vocation. Putting it directly, you find it necessary, as I suppose, to have your daily work in the telegraph office. You have to be faithful to this. You cannot abridge your hours nor lighten your work. So long as this is the way you earn your livelihood, it is plainly the duty which God gives you to do. This work is as much part of your Christian life as your prayer meetings or your Sunday services. You cannot be less than diligent.

God wants us to do whatever we can besides the tasks of our daily vocation. So long as you had strength for it, and had the opportunity, it was your duty evidently to conduct a certain religious work—your King's Daughters and other societies and your church work. But if you are not strong enough to do both, there is not the slightest doubt as to which one you should give up. You cannot lay down your daily tasks, for it is by these that you earn your daily bread. The others are to be done only in case you have time and strength for the doing of them.

I know some people might say this is a little irreligious. Some people interpret the Master's word, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," as meaning that our religious duties are first. But this is a mis-

taken way of interpreting the instruction. Only a few Sundays since I spoke on this subject in a sermon and said distinctly that there are times when one would commit a sin even to go to church. I instanced the case of a physician with patients who needed his attention at the hours of church service, and said that the doctor would commit a sin if he neglected his patients that he might attend to communion service. Another instance I gave was that of a mother whose sick child needed her attention all day on Sunday, and I said that she would also commit a grievous sin against God if she left her child to attend a missionary meeting or any other kind of religious service. The "kingdom of God" which we are to seek first is the duty of the hour.

I am not preaching to you—I am not your pastor; but what I have said I am sure is true. I want to help you to see that you will commit no sin if you lay down certain work which you have been doing and which you have loved to do. If you cannot do it without injuring your health and unfitting you for your ordinary duties, it is not your duty at all, but some other one's. I was talking last Saturday with a young woman who is a teacher in the high school and has a class of boys in a Sunday school. She works very hard in teaching, for she is also taking a special course of instruc-

tion herself to fit her better for her work as teacher. This special course fills some of her afternoons and part of her Saturdays. The result is that she really is not strong enough to teach a class of rollicking boys on Sunday afternoons. She has tried it now for six months, and each Monday feels unfit for her school work after the strain and pressure of the Sunday. I told her that very clearly her duty is to give up her Sunday-school class, much as she loves it. The other she cannot give up—it is the work God has given her to do, by which she earns support for herself and her mother.

I am very glad to know about your life, and I want to assure you of the deepest interest. I never shall forget you. It must be ten or eleven years now since I was in California, but I remember vividly the time when you spoke to me at the Western Union Telegraph Office in the Palace Hotel. I remember well the talks I had with you then during the few days I was in San Francisco. I remember your visit to Philadelphia the following summer. I have kept you in my heart all these years among my closest and best friends. Your life has been full of good things. You have been a benediction to many young people. You have guided many steps into the paths of truth and right. I want to assure you of loving remembrance and the deepest interest in all that you are do-

ing. I am always glad to have you write, but I must not burden you with requests to write frequently when you have so much to do.

VICTORIOUS LIVING

NOW about your work and your chief. I know it is not easy for you. I have a number of young friends in editorial offices, and more than one of them has come to me with the same complaint that your letter brings. I wish that men were all more gentle. In my Thanksgiving sermon I told the people that brusqueness is not only discourtesy but is even a sin. We have no right to speak harshly, rudely, bitterly, to anyone, however faulty the person may be, or for failing in any duty. Beginning with the fathers, and going up through teachers and employers, and those placed above others in any way, one of the finest marks of manliness is gentleness to those under one's authority. But we cannot make every man just this sort of person. We have to accept life as it comes to us.

Let me tell you what your part is. You have given yourself to Christ, and you want to learn the beautiful lessons of Christian life. If I put all my thought in a single sentence it is this—that you, as a Christian, want to live your

life sweetly, beautifully, however other persons about you may live. Rudeness, roughness and unkindness may make it hard for you, but, however hard it is, you are going on in a loving way, keeping sweet, answering gently, not resenting anything, never returning unkindness for unkindness, but the reverse—kindness for unkindness, gentleness for roughness. When you read the Sermon on the Mount, in the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of Matthew, you will find the way your Master wants you to live. You say, “Yes, but it is terribly hard to do this.” I know it is. It will not be possible always to keep back the tears when the sharp words fall upon your heart. Still, that is the lesson. You are not to grow cold and stoical, letting your feelings be hardened and your heart become bitter. I have seen fresh water springs bursting out on the beach of the sea, their waters as fresh as the waters that pour from the little fountains among the rocks on the hills. Presently the tide comes in, and for twelve hours the brackish waters pour over the little springs. But all the while, if we could get down to them, we should find the water just as sweet as it was when the tide was out. Then when at last the salt waters do withdraw, we find our springs just as sweet as they were before, untainted by the bitterness of the sea. This is an illustration of what I want your

heart to be. You may hear unkind criticism and unreasonable criticism, and you will sometimes want to cry, but do not grow bitter. Let no resentment start in your heart. Whatever others may do about you, however unkind they may be, you are to keep love in your heart all the while.

This is the secret of happiness. We always feel ashamed of ourselves when we get angry and return to others what they have given to us of unkindness. Nothing is sweeter than the consciousness that we have endured wrong, injury, and have kept sweet through it all. "But," you say, "how can I?" The Christmas lesson will help you to learn how. Let Christ into your life as your truest and closest Friend. When you read your New Testament you will find that this is just the way he lived. He was wronged, suffered all kinds of injury, and at last was nailed to the cross, but you cannot find a single bitter word through it all. His heart was sweet with love. Even when they were putting him on the cross he prayed to the Father to forgive them, for they knew not what they were doing. Christ wants to enter your life as the sunshine enters the diamond, making it shine.

Perhaps I have given you a hard lesson. I know it is ideal, and you cannot reach it in one day or one month or even fully in one year. But you can begin to learn the lesson. That is

all I want to have you to do. When you read this letter kneel down by your bedside and give yourself to Christ. You know how much interest I have in you—how I love you and want to help you. But think of this as only a mere hint of the far greater love that Christ has for you, and the deeper desire in his heart to make you strong and victorious.

Have you thought that perhaps the reason why the Master sent you into your editorial office is just that you may learn to be a Christian woman? I am learning more and more that that is what life here means. You are not there merely to write a page a day, and to do a certain amount of work in your office. But you are there in that office to grow into a Christian girl and woman. That is just why Christ sent you there. If everything were sweet and easy, and every bit of work you did received commendation and compliment, you would be made happier, but I think you see you would not be enjoying the opportunity to grow in certain phases at least of your life that you are now having. If you can live victoriously through all the experiences that you have to meet these days, you will be growing far more as a woman, as a Christian woman, than if you were having an easy time, with only gentleness and love about you. Think of this therefore. Henry Drummond said something like this—

that the carpenter is not in his shop to make certain things in wood, but he is there to grow into strong, true, noble manhood. You are in your office not primarily to do a certain amount of editorial work as well as you can—you are there to become more and more Christ-like. Years hence, when you are an older woman and have cares and responsibilities, you will know that when you thought you were badly used, when you cried from the rebuffs and the brusqueness and the unkindly criticisms, you were really learning more and growing more than in any other period of your life.

You understand that I want you to stay just where you are, to do the very best work you can, to learn the things you have not yet learned, and to overcome whatever defects or imperfections you may find in your education and training, and, whatever the experiences may be, to meet them quietly, bravely, cheerfully, and even songfully—in a word, living victoriously, keeping sweet through all.

Begin every morning with a special prayer that God will help you that day, first, to do your work well; second, to grow in patience and to bear whatever you have to bear without bitterness; and, above all, never to be discouraged, never to be defeated. Then at the close of each day you can come to the Master's feet and

tell him that you have done the best you could, have tried not to be impatient.

HOW DOES GOD LEAD US?

I AM interested very much in the questions you ask and in what you say also regarding the subject of divine leading. I think the better way would be for me sometime soon to preach a sermon which will practically answer your questions or, at least, try to answer them. I am very well aware of the difficulty which troubles you. It is not easy for us in every case to know what Christ's will is. It is easy to understand it in matters of morality, where a thing is either right or wrong, and where the divine teaching is plain. But in reference to daily guidance in the circumstances and experiences of life, it is often difficult to know what the will of the Lord is. It will do me good to write upon the subject, and I think it will do more people than you good to have it talked about.

Let me say in general that our own judgment, after careful thought and prayer, is often the only guidance God gives us. We are not by any means to think that anything is not a duty because it is difficult. Often God puts hindrances in our way just to make us brave and to teach us to be courageous and strong.

Indeed, the purpose of temptations, on the divine side, is to be a sort of athletic exercise for us, to develop our powers and discipline us into strength. Very much of what people complacently think virtue and piety in themselves and much they call "resignation to God's will" is only mental or spiritual indolence and is by no means commendable. We are to submit to inconveniences and difficulties only when we cannot overcome them. You will notice in the prayer it is not "Thy will be endured" or "submitted to," but "Thy will be done." It is the active doing of the will of God that is involved in this petition of the Lord's Prayer. A great many people get in the habit of thinking of it always as implying something in the way of suffering or sacrifice or loss. This is entirely a wrong view of it. No doubt we have to submit sometimes to suffering and loss and deprivation, but these are the exceptions and not the rule.

I am sure that you have been right in your interpretation of the will of God. We are always to make the very most we can of our lives. With regard to the particular matter in your present condition—your subordination to a person who is not congenial and under whom you do not seem to be able to do your best work, I can only say that whatever is inevitable, unavoidable, and cannot be changed for the pres-

ent, I suppose we are to accept as God's will for us for the time. It certainly does not mean, however, that we are not to seek release from the uncongenial and unpleasant environment. Perhaps some way will open for it soon. In such cases we have to be careful that we do no harm ourselves in seeking to right the wrong under which we are suffering. You remember what Peter says about suffering wrongfully, referring to Christ's own example. When he was reviled, he reviled not again. When he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. He also speaks of committing ourselves to God in well-doing, that we may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. What I want to say is that while we have a right to do all we can to change disagreeable or uncongenial conditions in our life, we must be careful that we maintain as far as we can the Christlike spirit, keeping love in our hearts all the while and doing nothing which in any way would grieve the Master.

But here I am, giving you my sermon now, before it is written. I shall take the matter up sometime before a great while. I am always glad to help you in any and every possible way.

**BEGINNING THE CHRISTIAN
LIFE**

A PLEA TO ACCEPT CHRIST

IT was a very great privilege to me to have the little talk with you last evening. I had supposed that you were both members of the Church. I am sure, however, that you both love Christ and trust him, and are trying to do what he would have you do.

Church membership is not the only test or proof of a Christian life. The Christian life begins in the heart. God is your Father and you are his children. The moment you take a child's place with God, know that he loves you and begin to love him in return and trust him, and try to do his will, that moment you are a Christian. It is a very sweet privilege to be a child of God. We all are God's children, but many people go on year after year without recognizing him as their Father. I have read of a young man who had gone away from home, into some foreign country, and was absent for years, never writing home, never hearing from home. At last he grew homesick and came across the sea and found his way back to the village where he had spent his childhood and where his father and mother used to live. But when he asked for them he found that they had moved away into the country—he could not exactly learn where. He was disappointed very much and left the

town, walking aimlessly along the country road. It was near night and the darkness was coming down. At last he stood before the door of a cottage, heartsick, weary, exhausted, and sat down upon the doorstep. Growing faint, he fell back against the door, which flew open. It was his own father's house, although he knew it not, and the father and mother were sitting inside, yearning for their long-lost boy. He did not know he was so near to them until, in his faintness, he found them bending over him. In the same way people often go on in their life, not knowing of God's love for them, until some experience of suffering or trouble reveals him to them.

I should like to help you to believe in God's love for you, his own children. He loves you tenderly and deeply. He gave his Son to die for you. Christ loves you and wants you to give yourselves to him. I am not preaching to you. I am merely trying to help you to know the wonderful love there is in the heart of Christ for you, and to help you, if I can, to accept him and take your place as his friend. As I said to you last evening, it will be very sweet if you will together give yourselves to Christ. This does not mean that you should join the Church at present—it means only that you shall, in the sweetness and the quietness of your own room, in the tenderness of your

love for each other, take Christ into your lives and give yourselves to him.

Then it is a very sweet privilege to put into Christ's hands all your affairs. You can talk to him about your sickness and ask him to bless the physician and give him wisdom, and to use the medicines and means for recovery. You can trust him with everything for the future, knowing that his love will be about you all the time.

You know how a child comes to a father or mother, opening his heart, telling his desires and longings and needs. You cannot see God and, therefore, it seems strange for you to think of talking to him. I suppose from what you say you have not been accustomed to pray. Let me say this to you, therefore, that if you kneel before God and talk to him out of your heart, telling him the very things you have told me, telling him you want to take your place as his child, that you want to have your sins forgiven, that you want to know his love for you, he will hear you, although you cannot see him, and will give you help. That is what prayer is—just talking to God out of your heart, telling him the things that you wish to tell him.

All these years, as I understand, you have not known, or, at least, have not stopped to think that you are God's child and that God loves you. God does love you. It may be hard

for you to understand that God, the great God who made all the worlds, loves you, just one being, amid the millions on the earth. But it is true. You know what the word "father" means. You know how you feel toward your children, how your heart yearns for them. Try to think of God, therefore, as loving you just as you have loved your children ever since they were born. It may seem mysterious and strange, but it is true.

The Bible teaches us also that to show his love, to make it plain to people in this world, God came into the world and lived as Jesus Christ. In John 3:16 we read, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The reason that God gave his Son was that he might make himself known in a human life. If you will quietly read one of the Gospels to-morrow—Matthew or Mark or Luke or John—in which you will find the story of the life of Jesus Christ, you will learn how God feels toward you. He loves you, he wants to save you. Jesus Christ died on the cross that he might redeem the world. Now all those who accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour, as their Master and their Friend, are saved.

All these years you have not known God. Think of a child growing up in a home twenty,

thirty, forty, fifty years, and never recognizing the father or the mother, never showing them any love or honor, never making any requests of them, never doing anything for them. If you have not been recognizing God as your Father, do you not want to do so at once? That is what it is to become a Christian—it is simply to believe in God's love for you, to accept that love, to take a child's place toward God, and begin to love and honor and serve him.

I want to help you in every possible way. What I have written to you here tells you of the first step. Go to God in prayer, begin to talk to him, tell him that you have sinned against him, that you have neglected him all these years, that you have not even thought of his love for you, that you have not loved him, that you have not lived for him. A good many years of your life are gone, but you cannot change this now. One thing, however, you can do—you can give God all that remains.

Then if you wish to unite with the Church the way will be open for you. Christ wants us to confess him before our friends, not to hide our love, nor try to be secret friends, but to tell others. He says, "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him

will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven.”

WHAT IT MEANS TO UNITE WITH THE CHURCH

A FRIEND has written to me asking me to write you some words about joining the Church. It is a very sweet pleasure indeed to do this. I suppose what you would like to know is something about the meaning of this act. Let me tell you as simply as I can what I think it means.

The first thing is to accept Jesus Christ as your Saviour. You know that God loved the world and gave his Son to be our Saviour, and that Jesus Christ lived and did beautiful things, healing the sick and comforting the people. At last he was crucified by the people he had come to save. But God raised him up from the dead and now he lives in heaven as our Saviour and Friend.

He sends out the gospel through the world, calling on everyone to accept him and follow him. He wants you to be his friend. You need him as your Saviour—you cannot be saved without him. To believe in him is to accept him as your Redeemer, to love him, to put your life into his hands, to take him as your Master and

to follow him as faithfully as you can all your life.

There are three names of Christ which tell us what he is. First, he is your Saviour. He died for you and you accept his death as the putting away of your sins.

Second, he is your Master. This means that you are to obey him. He says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." That is, if you are to be a Christian, while you trust him for everything, you are to do his will, to read your Bible, to know what he wants you to do, to listen to his voice and to try in all things to follow him.

Third, he is your Friend. This means that he comes into your life into a closer place than mother or father or any friend ever can have. He loves you with a love tender and deep and strong and true and unchanging. He will never cease to love you. Even if you should get careless, he will not give you up. Even if you should do wrong things, he will not cast you off. He will always cling to you and follow you. Then you are to love him. Your love is to be shown not so much in feeling as in the way you live, in doing what he wants you to do, in being what he wants you to be.

Thus I have explained to you what it is to be a Christian. Now all those who follow

Christ are asked to confess him before the world. He asked his first disciples to leave all and follow him. He does not ask you to leave your home and your friends, but he does ask you to leave whatever may be wrong in your life. Thus hereafter when you find anything is wrong, that you have any fault, you are to leave the wrong and give up the fault, and turn to Christ always.

Confessing Christ before the world means, first, to unite with the Church. Then you come to the Lord's Table and receive the Communion. This means that you take Christ as your Saviour, his body broken for you, his blood shed for you, and that you give yourself to him, to be faithful to him in every way, as far as you possibly can, as long as you live.

But confessing Christ means more than this. It is not enough to join the Church and to love Christ and be true to him when we are among Christians or in church service. We are to be faithful to Christ all the week, out among our friends, in our school life, in our play and in everything and always. That is, you are never to do anything, wherever you go, that would disown Christ.

In joining the Church you will also promise to do what you can to bring other persons to him. This you can do, first, by praying for them, then by trying to get them to attend the

services with you, and sometimes you may say a word which may lead some friend or some neighbor to be a Christian.

It means also that always you will be loving and kind. Love is the great lesson of all Christian life. Not only are we to love Christ but we are to love each other. This means that at home you will learn to be gentle, patient, thoughtful, kind and obliging. It means that you will also be kind and helpful to every person, always watching for opportunities of doing good, always reaching out your hand to help those who need help.

Do not be afraid to unite with the Church. I am sure that you love Christ, that you trust him as your Saviour, and that you want to follow him. He will not leave you alone. As long as you are faithful and try to do your duty, he will not fail you, but will bless you in every way you need. As you pray day by day for strength he will give it to you. Take your place in the Church with quiet confidence, thanking God for his goodness, rejoicing that you can be a Christian, and accepting Christ in all his love and grace as your dearest, truest, strongest and best Friend.

Then, when you have joined the Church, remember that there is no better help in the Christian life than to be active, not only in common duties, but in special work for Christ.

WHICH CHURCH SHALL I JOIN?

REFERRING to the matter of churches, concerning which you write, I scarcely know how to advise you, not knowing anything about the ministers or churches of your home city. Very frankly, there are not enough ministers who take personal interest in their people. They preach well and organize well, but many of them are lacking in the element of personal helpfulness. You cannot go to them and sit down beside them to unburden your heart, to ask them questions, and to get help in this way. The other day a young woman was saying to me that she went once to a Philadelphia pastor, one of the best preachers in the city, with some little questions which had arisen in her mind. He thought that she was heretical and began at once to give her a severe lecture on the subject of orthodoxy. The result was that he shut her heart up tight, and for two years she carried the burden, with no light and no help. Indeed, she was only saved from growing utterly indifferent and even bitter in her heart when she came to me and was encouraged to state her difficulties. Instead of listening to her recital with blame and criticism, I happened to understand her and tried to help her. The result is now, after a year and a half

of life in our church, she is one of the happiest women I know, her soul full of sunshine and her heart full of God's peace. I mention this not to commend my own pastoral way, but simply to say that many pastors fail to understand how to help people in personal ways. Let me ask you therefore to bring me your questions, if you will, and let me help you with them.

What you want is to get into close and perfect relation with Christ himself. He is a personal Friend. It is not the church that helps you. Whether you join a Presbyterian church or a Methodist church or a Roman Catholic church, you will find that the vital thing, after all, is your personal relation with Christ. Let me say to you for myself that after all my years of teaching and helping others, and all my experiences as a Christian, my whole creed has been brought down into one little sentence—"Christ and I are friends." No friend in all the world is so near to me as he is. I trust him, I love him, I take everything to him, I lay every burden upon him. I go to him for wisdom, for help, for the love I need in my own heart. He is everything to me as Friend. Then for myself my whole duty is summed up in being a friend of Christ's. He says, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." This includes all duty.

In telling you this I want to help you to un-

derstand that the essential thing in a religious life is knowing Christ, trusting him, loving him, following him, having Christ for your Friend and being his friend. Then as to the church in which you will have your spiritual home, everything depends upon your convenience and opportunity. You want a place where you will feel at home, where the people will be congenial, where you can have some personal friendships. If you like some one church, if the preaching helps you, and if the services are interesting, why should you not make your home there for the present at least? Then if, in the future, some other church should prove to be more a home to you, you can readily transfer your membership at will.

NO WITHDRAWING FROM THE WORLD

IT is my belief that Christ wants us to take our place in life in the most natural way, and to do our work right among people, in our natural relations, or in the particular lines into which he may call us. You remember that Jesus, in his last prayer with his disciples, recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, did not ask to have his disciples taken out of the world, away from the world's dangers, evils and experiences, but that they might stay in the

world and be kept from its evil. Personally I have no sympathy with the monastic life, because it seems to me that it violates that particular thought of the Master for his followers and friends. To put it more simply, you are a bright, happy girl, you love people, and people love you. You have already had enough experiences to show that you may have a tremendous influence over people. Your personality is strong. People take to you and like you, and are ready to follow you and let the influence of your life into their inner lives. What you have learned of life already in the past is sufficient proof to you of this. You do not know how much good you can do in the world by just letting your light shine on other people's lives, allowing your life to go out to those who need sympathy, kindness, protection, and whatsoever is good and beautiful.

God holds us responsible for the very best that we can do in helping on the kingdom of Christ, that is, in making others better, in helping others over hard ways. You remember that Christ himself lived this kind of life. John the Baptist was an ascetic, and lived in the wilderness away from people, and then came out and spoke his words which touched people's hearts and transformed their lives. But when Jesus came he lived differently. He never hid himself away from people. He never became a

recluse. He went everywhere, even to the homes of Pharisees who disliked him, and of publicans and sinners, who were branded as outcasts. He refused no opportunities of being helpful in personal ways. To him the world was simply a field in which he might do good. In every person he met he saw some one whom he longed to help in some way, and to whom he gave out the best he had of love, sympathy, cheer, comfort. When people followed him into his seclusion, even when he was seeking to be alone with God, he never became impatient. The man who wanted to see him was the man he wanted to see. The person who was hungry or was weary, sad, ignorant, unhelped, sinful, was just the person he wanted to touch and help and lift up.

You get my thought. Christ's idea of a beautiful life is one spent as he spent his, among people, among needy people, among sad and lost people, helping them upward. This is the life to which I would like to see you devote yourself. If you withdraw from the world and take up a monastic life you will have opportunities in certain ways, of doing good, but a large part of your time will be spent in personal devotions, seeking the purifying of your own life. This is all very beautiful, but it does not seem to me to fulfill the Master's purpose for you. There are some people who cannot help others

in personal ways. Because of shyness or other physical conditions they cannot be of great use to people. It may be that for these the quiet, secluded life is best. But you are not a girl of this kind. You have splendid abilities for personal helpfulness. I should love to see you put your whole life into the work of Christ among girls.

LEARNING TO TRUST

IT seems to me that what you want is a simpler and more childlike faith. You say that you cannot live up to the things you read in the Bible and in good books. I know of no one who can do so. Heaven always keeps above us. The Bible sets before us very lofty ideals, so lofty that we cannot reach them in a day or a month or in twenty-five years. So long as you may live, and if you spend every year in striving toward the best things, you will still find that you have not attained. Paul was a great deal better Christian than most of us, and he said, when he was quite an old man, that he was not yet perfect, but was still striving after the things which he wished to have. We never measure up to our ideals. We never are so good any day as we intend to be in the morning when we set out. We certainly fall very far below God's requirements. If we

did not, there would be no special need of a Saviour. Jesus Christ came into the world to redeem us and save us, because we cannot save ourselves, because we cannot live up to the requirements of a divine law. Remember this, that all perfection is relative. A piano pupil may get the lesson perfectly the second day after she has begun. That is, she may do the little piece of work her teacher gave her as well as anyone could do it, yet you would not call the child a perfect piano player. She probably has ten years before her yet of self-discipline and training of the hardest kind before she reaches up to a high enough attainment to be called a good player. It is so in Christian life. God may approve us the second day of our efforts to follow Christ and say that we have done beautifully. But we are only beginning, as we have years and years of growth before us. But at any point in all this time we must be judged by the measure of our progress. You find now very much yet to learn and tell me that you are not able to live up to the things you find in good books. But remember, you have been only a few years following Christ. You must not judge yourself, therefore, too severely. Christ does not. He is very patient with our slow progress. Always do your best every day, and you will do better still to-morrow.

What I want to get you to cultivate is a quiet trust, the peace of God in your heart, and joy and gladness in all your experiences. You must not fret, you must not look too much inward at your own spiritual condition, or backward at the slow progress you have been making in your spiritual life. Make every day as beautiful as you can, pure and true and holy, with obedience and love. Then next day can be made a little better than this one, and so on through every day unto the end. You will still find on the last evening of your life that you have very much to learn, that really you have just begun to be a Christian. I think it was Rubinstein, the great musician, who said at the close of a long life, devoted to intense musical work, "I have just begun to know music." It is so in Christian life. If you live to be eighty years old, growing every day better and better, you can say then no more than that you have begun, just begun, to know Christ and to know how to live a Christian life.

All this world's life is just preparation for the larger, fuller, higher life waiting for us on the other side. Think of this, and while you devote yourself very earnestly to the things which you are called to do, and to the cultivation of your spiritual life, remember that you will never get to the end until you leave this

world and enter upon the more perfect life in heaven.

LETTING THE FACE TALK

YOU have had a busy year, I am sure. But as you come toward the end of it I think you can look back upon it with a large measure of gratitude in your heart. Indeed, you speak of this in your letter in connection with the Thanksgiving time. Gratitude is not only a duty, but it gives great pleasure to the heart that cherishes it. All that the year has brought you is good. That is to say, we can put into the hands of God all the experiences of our year, even the things which have seemed hard and hurtful, knowing that there is a Hand which will so shape results as to bring out of all the tangles of the year a beautiful web. Even our faults, our follies and our sins we may put into the same Hand if we are truly penitent, and leave them there, knowing that from these, too, some blessing will come to us. It is wonderful how good God is to us and how he takes whatever we give him, even the poorest fragments of our obediences, even our mistakes and our sins, and out of them brings something helpful and full of good for us.

With regard to what you say about the article by Dr. Banks—that we should let our hearts

out to people—no doubt his advice is good. There is a great lack of expression of love, especially in homes. I have not seen the article to which you refer, but I suppose that Dr. Banks has reference to this particular phase of the subject—the necessity not only for love but for the utterance of love, for the words which tell of that love. There certainly is a great need in many homes and in many friendships of such expressions. Only last evening in my sermon I spoke of it. I was preaching about Mary and Martha and Jesus. It is said that Mary anointed Jesus aforehand for his burial. I spoke of the “aforehand” kindness—not waiting until he was dead. A great many people, you know, show very little love along the way, even to their best friends; then when the friends are dead they send immense bouquets and flower pieces of extravagant dimensions and cost. I have always said that I would prefer a few flowers now and then along the dusty way, when my heart was weary and I needed renewal of strength, rather than the repression of love all the years and then an outburst when it will amount to nothing for me. I appreciate what you say, however, about the particular phase of the subject which concerns yourself. You can let your love out, however intense it may be, when you are sure of your friends.

You ask, "Why do people, even strangers, happen on one's sore point always?" I cannot answer this question. The other evening a young girl asked me, "Do you believe in luck?" She went on to tell me how for her sister everything went right and happily, while for her everything went wrong, that she had only disappointment after disappointment. I tried to show the child that it was not luck, that there must be some reason for what seemed to her partiality, even if she cannot find it. I tried to explain to her how different people need different discipline. This may be one reason. Sometimes the reason lies in oneself. We find in the world what we are prepared to find. A person with a happy heart always finds happiness. One with a sad, gloomy heart always finds sadness and gloom.

By the way, have you ever thought of our responsibility for the looks on our faces—whether they are happy or the reverse? Margaret Fuller tells of her own experiences as a child, when she used to sit in church and watch the faces of the worshipers, trying to find in those faces some interpretation or expression of the things which these people were saying in their hymns and prayers and professed to believe. She said that she could not find these ideals there. She speaks then of the hurt to her own life from people's faces, their severe

looks, their lack of gladness and joy. Some people seem altogether to forget that they are responsible for being glad-hearted and joyous, even if they have trouble. The other day a mother who had passed through a very great sorrow said to me that she tried always to keep her face happy and bright at home, that she might not cast upon her children's lives any shadow of the grief which had so emptied her own life. She was right, but the same rule applies to other people besides one's children.

The other day a gentleman, when introduced to a lady, said, "I owe you a great debt, a debt far larger than ever I can pay." The lady could not understand his meaning, and he explained to her that one day he was going down town in a trolley car when he was greatly depressed. Everything had seemed to go wrong, and he was in a very black mood. Opposite him on the car this lady sat, and as he looked at her face he saw there something which told of courage, peace, serenity and quiet confidence, and that face drove away his gloom and all the shadows and changed his black mood into one of trust and peace. He took the earliest opportunity to thank his benefactor for what she had done for him that day.

This lady was entirely unconscious of the kindness she was doing. It was no part of her plan to make the stranger opposite to her hap-

pier that day. But she had a face which told of victory, the peace of God, the joy of Christ, of a sweet, self-controlled life. So wherever she went her influence was for good and blessing.

All of us should cultivate the same sort of face. At least, we should think of our responsibility for our looks and for the influence we exert upon people by the kind of face we show them.

PERSONALITY FOR CHRIST

IT has been a pleasure all these years to get letters from you, but since you paid the little visit to my office and I saw you face to face and had a few minutes' talk with you, you are much more of a reality and less of a mere ideality than you were formerly. I can see your kindly face looking out from the pages on which you write, and can hear your voice as I read the words over. God has given you much in your personality. What a wonderful gift personality is! Those to whom God has given the power of helping others merely by their presence, of being a benediction, an encouragement, a comfort to them, even without any words, are especially gifted. I know people who are not brilliant, who never do any great things, but whose lives are so true, so consistent, so Christlike, that wherever they go they carry in

their very presence a bit of heavenly sunshine. Concerning one of these a friend said a few years since, standing by the coffin of the young woman who had been called home, "Wherever she went, flowers grew in her pathway, and the air was always sweeter when she entered the room." This is true of certain lives, even apart from what they do. Of course, usually, it is the life that makes the face and that gives to the presence its strange power. At least, those who are not beautiful in life and character cannot long retain the normal benediction that God put into their faces when he made them. May God give you grace always to be a blessing wherever you go, not only in the things you do and the things you say, but still more in yourself in the sweet and quiet influence of your life.

I am glad to read what you say about your home and your work. I trust that this year will bring you all the work that you can do well, without overcrowding you. You have a special gift for writing missionary articles, in particular phases of Sunday-school work, and on practical subjects which are always fitting. You have given your pen to Christ—that is the best part of it all—and whenever you choose to write you write for him, or, rather, he writes through you. I trust that you will have as much as you can do during the year, and that you

will be strong and well for whatever comes to you. You must enjoy your missionary meetings, going about from place to place and speaking to earnest people. I trust that more and more this field will widen for you, giving you new opportunities of speaking for Christ and advocating missionary work.

It must have been very pleasant to meet the old friend and have her recall so much of your babyhood and infancy. These links with the past are always very tender. I understand what you say about the healing of your sorrows. God never blames you for your love or for the tenderness of your feelings when you recall the memory of those who are gone. My thought, however, is that we should accept God's comfort by sweet acquiescence in his will, in the faith that whatever he permits in our life is right. Then I think, also, that if we allow our faith to make more real to us the continued existence of our loved ones in the other life, with all their faculties, their affections, their beauties of character, this ought to be a great comfort to us, helping us not only to acquiesce, but to rejoice. For example, my mother has been very much more real to me during the long years since she went away than she was during the same number of years before she left this world. I saw her then but rarely—not more than once a year. Then she

was a sufferer most of the time and every thought I had of her was painful because it brought her before me in illness or feebleness. Now, however, I think of her as away beyond all sickness, all suffering, all pain, having lost nothing that was beautiful in her life, a transfigured woman, in the presence of Christ, engaged in his service in another world. This is a wonderful comfort to me. It not only makes her existence even more real than it was when she was living in Ohio, but it makes the thought of her very much sweeter and more joyous.

I am sure that as you go on and realize more and more of your mother's life as it is now with Christ in the heavenly kingdom your comfort will become deeper and your peace will become deeper and sweeter.

WISE AND UNWISE TESTIMONY FOR CHRIST

I KNOW that the work which you are doing, especially in the class of colleges of which you speak, is hard and discouraging. The pressure of work is so great that the girls are quite apt to decide that they have no time for religious or devotional meetings of any kind, scarcely even time to read the Bible and pray. This is unfortunate. Indeed, it is not true that

they are so driven. Luther used to say, "I have so much to do that I cannot get along with less than three hours a day praying." The more he had to do, the more he needed to pray, for with him, to pray was to work. However, this is not the mood in which most college girls approach the subject. They look at it from a different point of view, and too often it is quite easy for them to set it entirely aside.

I want to talk to you about a matter which I am quite sure you have noticed yourself in these colleges. I am not certain that there is any way to remedy it, but, at the same time, it is important that workers like yourself should have a full conception of it and should give it careful consideration. It so happens that many of the girls in these colleges who seem to represent the best Christian elements are not themselves such girls as can influence others. Often they are not the best in their standing in the class. Then, frankly, they do not seem to have a fortunate way of expressing their Christian life. It partakes too much of the goody-goody style. It is not strong, vigorous, nor very wholesome Christianity. Sometimes they are rather morbid girls. Then, in their contact with the others, especially in their efforts to do them good, they lack tact. The same thing is observable everywhere. Some of the most earnest Christians in churches are often those

whose influence over others is not very strong.

I have thought that possibly you might be able to do something in this direction by talking freely to the Christians in the different colleges on the necessity of wisdom in the expression of their Christian life and in their efforts to do others good. Religion ought to be the most natural thing in the world. It should always be approached in a natural way, so as not to give to the efforts of good people the semblance of impertinence. Some years ago I was in California and strolled into the Y. M. C. A. rooms one day. A young man, seeing me there as a stranger, approached me and began to "talk religion" to me. I was quite anxious to find out his method, and was noncommittal at first in my answers and developed in him some of the very worst phases of that professional talk which is too common, even among good people. It is nothing more than miserable cant, and, if I had not been a Christian man, with a large amount of patience gathered for the occasion, I should certainly have felt that he was exceedingly impertinent, talking to me in a way in which he had no right to talk and saying things of which he had the smallest possible knowledge himself.

I think you will appreciate my motive in writing of this to you, as I have done, so frankly. I have been trying, as far as I possibly could,

to help the Christian students, as I have met them, from time to time, to learn the lesson that they must be simple, sincere and natural, not only in their Christian life, but especially in their conversations on religious subjects. As a rule, Christian students had better not do very much talking about religion to those who are not Christians. The better way for them is to live out their religion in their contact with these girls, to pray much for them and to learn to love them deeply and truly, but not to speak to them personally until the time comes for it. I have known girls who, by their beautiful life, have won the confidence and the affection of those not Christians and have also won their respect for religion. The time has come, by and by, when they could speak to them and when every word they spoke was golden, because of the place they had won in the hearts of these girls by their sweet, beautiful and sincere Christian life and character.

DOUBTS AND DOUBTERS

TO ONE WHOSE RELIGIOUS BELIEF
HAS BEEN UNSETTLED

WHEN God takes out of our life any friend who was close and whom we expected to come closer still, we may always say that God knows best. It is not wise to attempt to explain God's reason for taking our friends out of our life. We would make very foolish mistakes if we were to try to do this. But we are sure, at least, that whatever God does send to us, or allow to come into our life, he will use for blessing to us, if we creep close to him and keep close to him all the while. It seemed to you that this man was necessary to your happiness. But you will learn that God can make you happy without him, since, evidently, it was not part of God's plan that you should go on through life together. I am glad to know that nothing occurred to make you regret your friendship with him, and that, in looking back over it, the memory is sweet and sacred.

I am sorry that you have become unsettled in your religious belief through the things that friends have been saying to you. I would not want to enter into any discussion with your good friend who has spoken to you so skepti-

cally concerning Christian faith. If he denies that the Bible is the Word of God, sweeping it all away with one brush of his hand, of course then he may say that no one knows about the future and the other life. I suppose he calls himself an agnostic. But you must not let such impressions as these hurt your own Christian faith. I need not enter into any argument to prove to you that the Bible is the Word of God, but let me simply urge you to keep fast hold of your childhood's faith. Jesus Christ came from God, and he revealed to us what God is like, what life's future is. More than that, he went down into the grave and then came again from the grave, the only person who has conquered death during all the world's history. He went there as our Master, our Redeemer, our Saviour. The teachings of Christ are, therefore, full of revelations about the character of God and also contain many revealings about the life that lies beyond. If you read the New Testament reverently, you cannot but believe these things, for the book is full of self-evidence. There are a few agnostics in the world, perhaps some of them sincere in their belief. There are a few skeptics who doubt. But you know that the great mass of people to whom the Word of God has come, who have received it into their hearts with docile spirit, and really desire to know the truth, have found the teachings of the

Bible incontrovertibly true, self-evidently true. If there were no "evidences of Christianity" to which we might turn, I think that I may say to you that my own knowledge of Christ as a personal Friend and Saviour and Helper and Guide for my life is sufficient evidence to make me believe and know that I am immortal, that Christ is the Son of God, that when I leave this world I will pass out of imperfection and failure and stumbling into fuller light, deeper joy and sweeter peace. You will find the greatest comfort in simply getting back into the heart of Christ, putting away all your questions and all your fears, believing Christ to be your Saviour, your Friend, your Master, and then following him implicitly, with trust and joy and peace.

You tell me of what has been said to you—that the death of the little child was a punishment to you for having loved him so much and that because you were rebellious God took him away. I am sure she would not have said that but for the great sorrow in her heart. We must have all manner of patience with those who are passing through great sorrows. One with a broken heart will say things which would not be said at another time. Put out of your mind forever all thought that God ever takes away a child to punish another person. The child's life was just what God meant it to be, having filled out the little plan which God had for it in

his thought. He took it home because home was better for it. It is safer now inside the gates with Christ than it ever could have been in the world outside.

Try to get away from all these feelings and fears and uncanny impressions which seem to be possessing your mind. The simpler your faith the better it will be. Let Christ into your heart, let him be your Teacher and your Friend and guide you ever in the way in which he would have you to walk.

TO ONE WHO IS DEPRESSED

I AM glad that you told me the story of your life, for it enables me to think of you more intelligently and to help you more truly. Let me assure you of the sincerest sympathy with you in the experiences which have seemed to be hard. Yet I would not say a word to make your heart less strong for the meeting of these experiences. Sometimes human sympathy does harm rather than good—I mean that the sympathy is not of the kind which makes people brave and strong. I want to be to you a friend who will not merely sympathize with you in the things that are painful and hard, but also be a strength to you, an inspiration, an inciter to energy and courage. A true life is not one

that is overmastered by discouragements, but one that meets every hard thing with determination to overcome it. If we are Christians we should always live victoriously, not only over the sins which beset us and assail us, but also over the trials which make it harder for us to live.

The goodness of God never fails. Being a Christian, you can commit your whole life to Christ with implicit confidence, assured of his loving interest and help. We know that "all things work together for good to them that love God." If you simply love God and trust yourself in his hands, all things, the hard things as well as the easy, the painful things as well as the pleasant, the losses as well as the gains—all will work together for your good. So I want to help you to be brave and strong for the battle before you.

I fear you have given way somewhat to the feeling of depression. Perhaps it could hardly have been otherwise with you, for you have had many things to depress you. But I want to come into your life as an uplifter, and I want to help you turn your face away from the shadows, from the gloom, from the sorrows and losses, and to face the light, the joy, the blessing and the good. Let nothing whatever dishearten you. Our best friend is not the one who pampers us and pets us and makes us conscious of

the sadness of our life, but the friend who helps us to become victor over all these things.

I think I shall not attempt to answer your questions about the one or two texts which are troubling you. Evidently there is a little unwholesomeness in your mind at present concerning spiritual things. It is never right for us to allow one or two hard words or phrases in the Bible to cause us anxiety. Phrases of this kind do not fairly represent the teaching of the Bible. This we find in such phrases as John 3:16, and countless other passages, where the love of God is represented in such a clear and strong way that it is impossible for us to fail to understand it. Let me say to you, therefore, once for all, that it is the tempter who is trying to hurt your life by keeping before your mind the text about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and the sin that cannot be forgiven. This is a way the tempter has. I have known a great many people who were kept in misery for a long time through one or two of those sayings in the Scriptures which are dark and incomprehensible and seem somehow to have terror in them. The whole Bible teaches without any question that everyone who comes to Christ is welcomed by him, is received with open arms and tender love. There is really no unpardonable sin save the sin of utter and final rejection of Christ. Please fix this truth in

your mind and turn away from these painful thoughts which have been perplexing you.

What you say about having in your mind these unhappy thoughts shows to me that you are not at present altogether well physically. Only a few weeks since a young woman came to me with almost precisely the same sort of experience. I try to be a physician for the whole life, for I know that very often some little wrong in the body casts a shadow over the mind and spirit. I saw at once that the young woman was in unhealthy mood. I sent her to a wise and kindly physician. The physician made a little examination and discovered the secret of the trouble, and, after a few weeks' treatment, the young girl is out in the bright sunshine again. The whole trouble was physical. I want to say to you, therefore, my child, that there is something a little bit wrong with you somewhere in your physical condition, something which makes you sensitive, which makes your brain a little feverish. Either you want a quiet rest or medical treatment in a mild way. One who is perfectly well is not troubled by such unwholesome feelings and fears as you have.

Pardon me for speaking to you about this, but I want to be to you the truest and best friend possible, a physician indeed, who would help you into the brightest and clearest and happiest life. Let God's sunshine flow about

your soul. Do not allow little specks to darken all the brightness of the sky. Do not allow a little thorn or brier here and there to make you oblivious of the great garden of roses which spreads before you. You are God's child, and you must rest yourself in your Father's hands, with implicit confidence.

May God's richest and best blessing be upon your life. Put away all the fears and let the love prevail.

THE SIMPLICITY OF FAITH

YOUR letter touches my heart very deeply.

It is not often that I have known such an experience as yours. Indeed, no two experiences ever are identical. But it is not often that one accepts the truth about Christ as you have done, in such simplicity, with such avidity, allowing it to enter into your heart and possess your life. That is precisely the ideal for Christian faith. Christ complained once to his people that his words did not have free course in them. He meant that they did not let his words into their lives, were not interested by them, did not follow them. The only test of faith is obedience. A great many people read the New Testament and enjoy it in a certain way, and yet it has but very little effect

upon them. Last New Year's Day a young man said to his pastor:

"I have gone through the Bible five times the past year."

The pastor quietly asked him:

"How often has the Bible gone through you during the year?"

That is the test. When I hear people talking about reading the Scriptures, I want to know what effect the Scriptures have had upon them. In your case, you have accepted the teachings of Christ in their literalness, and have followed them implicitly.

You probably have read of Lady Aberdeen and how she came to accept Christ. She was trying to settle the question of Christ's personality and place in life intellectually, but could not do it satisfactorily. She could not yield her heart to Christ because she could not understand everything. She wanted to know before she would believe and follow. Sitting one day in her garden, pondering the great questions, she seemed to hear a voice, as if from heaven, saying to her, "Act as if I were, and you will learn that I am." The words seemed a real message from the Master to her, and she at once said, "I will." She began to act as if the things that the Scriptures said were literally true, and at every point she found that they were true. Every promise

that she tested and proved was fulfilled to her.

I do not know that you had any such struggle in your own experience before you accepted Christ, but it is just in this way that you have been doing. No doubt you have your questions. There are difficulties which you cannot solve. There are mysteries in the gospel which you cannot understand. But none of these things are troubling you or holding you back—you are acting as if the things that Christ says about himself are literally true, and you are finding them true at every point. It has been a great comfort to me to know of your trust and following of Christ, and to be able to help you even a little.

There came into the church of which I am pastor, a young woman, a teacher in a girls' high school, who had almost lost her faith. She had become entangled in all manner of questions—the questions which are being raised by critics about the person of Christ and his life and work. I never saw a sadder person than she was. I remember very well my first talk with her, when she came to tell me of her doubts and questions. I asked her to lay all these things aside, and let them wait until she had more light for them, meanwhile accepting Christ just as he offered himself to her in the Gospels. I asked her to read the Four Gospels over carefully with this one ques-

tion in mind: "What does Jesus say that he is and that he wants me to do?" She did it honestly and sincerely, and in a very short time the change in her face became apparent. She was laying aside her doubts and questions and difficulties, and was letting Christ into her life in just the way he wanted to come, with love and grace and help and guidance. Easter Sunday evening I preached on the way Christ dealt with the doubts of Thomas, and then Thomas' confession, "My Lord and my God." The next morning I received a letter from her, telling me that she was a living illustration of what I had been trying to say to the people—that the simple acceptance of Christ without question or doubt was the sure way to peace and gladness, to light and perfect liberty.

Excuse all this long letter about matters that do not really affect you. But I was thinking of the way you avoided the troubles and struggles and difficulties which so many people make for themselves in demanding to know before they will trust. That was the trouble with Thomas, you remember. He must see the print of the nails for himself before he would believe.

You ask if I would accept you as a member in St. Paul Church in your present condition of mind. Indeed I would. As I explained to you, our church does not require anything more

than a simple acceptance of Jesus Christ as Saviour, Master and Friend, and the devotion of the life to him. This does not mean that we do not expect people to learn more about Christ than just these simple things. They are to go on learning all the while. The church is a school in which they are to be trained. But for the beginning this is all we require. No matter what questions or difficulties one may have, if one is willing to accept Christ and begin to follow him sincerely and truly, that is all we desire. I wish that you lived in Philadelphia, or near enough to come to St. Paul Church now and then. It would be a great joy indeed to welcome you into the membership, and to have you come to the Lord's Table with us.

TO ONE DISTURBED ABOUT THE HIGHER CRITICISM

I HAVE your letter, telling me about your anxiety since hearing your sister's recital of her experiences. I feel very sorry that she has turned away so completely from the faith that but a little while ago made her so happy, and inspired her to such earnest helpfulness and usefulness. I have written her very frankly that the things she alleges are without

foundation. I know all about the battle that is going on in Germany, in England, and also in this country concerning the person and work of Christ, concerning the Bible, both the Old and the New Testament.

The only way to live happily and to keep our feet on the rock in these days of skepticism and doubt is to rest upon the great fundamental truths, leaving all the uncertainties and all the questions in the hands of God. For some years the Christian world has been having a very serious time. I do not know how much you know of this, but in Germany especially, and also in Great Britain, there has been a vast amount of doubting on many questions. It has been the effort of certain scholars to overturn a large part of the New Testament. The great facts of Christianity have been disputed. Men are denying the resurrection of Christ. Then many are denying the teaching in Matthew and Luke of the virgin birth. In this country the battle is on. Almost all the religious periodicals, especially the more advanced ones, are discussing these questions with a great deal of earnestness. I am not afraid of this chaotic condition of thought regarding Christianity. It is to be expected. The whole matter of Biblical criticism in the last twenty years has tended to unsettle the faith of many people. But I am sure that we are coming out of it all by

and by into what may be called a new Christianity—not new in its great facts, but new in its traditional beliefs.

The safest way, therefore, for you and your sister, and for all of us who are not able to enter into the discussions of the scholars concerning these vital questions, is to keep our faith strong and simple concerning the person of Christ himself, and to cling to him with unwavering attachment, leaving all matters of particular beliefs and doctrines to be settled by and by, as they will ultimately be settled without doubt. Even if something has to be given up, we need not be afraid. The vital thing is that Christ is the Son of God, that he came to be the Saviour of the world, that if we receive him as our personal Saviour, and rest on him, we never shall be disappointed. This is enough for us to cling to. So long as we hold this belief nothing can destroy our faith and confidence. I have always said to people regarding the things they could not understand, and also the things they could not quite believe, that they are not required either to understand or to believe these things in order to be saved. If they will simply follow Christ as Saviour, Master, Friend, all will be well, and these perplexing questions, these mysteries, these difficulties of interpretation and belief, may be left outside entirely. Some day we shall un-

derstand, some day we shall know. We can afford to wait.

Let me advise you simply to stay by the old faith which has meant so much to you in the past, which has carried you through your troubles and difficulties, through your sorrows and cares, giving you peace, and blessing you so wonderfully. I may not say a word against your sister's experience. I have stood by her through all her previous changes of opinion, trying to help her from time to time. I cannot help her now—no one can; but I am quite satisfied to wait, for I know perfectly well that she is right at heart, and that, when these new opinions of hers have been thoroughly tested by her, she will abandon them, as she has abandoned other things in the past. She will come back with childlike belief to Jesus Christ as her Master and Saviour.

My advice to her is simply in a word—to put her trust in the personal Christ, and never waver for a moment. I do not see how anyone can waver in his faith in Christ when one has once known him. I am in the habit of saying that Christ and I are friends. There is no other friend in all the world who has been so real to me these many years as he has been. We live together, my Master and I; we talk together, we work together. I could as much doubt the existence of my own wife as the

existence of Jesus Christ. I have not the slightest doubt, either, about his divine character, his power, his place in the world. I have heard all these things that your sister has heard, over and over and over and over again, and they have never shaken my faith for a single moment in the great fundamental truths of Christianity.

I am not afraid of the higher criticism. I am not afraid of its results. If there happen to be portions of certain books that higher criticism proves to have been written by some different author, or at some different time, than I have supposed, it does not trouble me in the least. The Bible itself is true—all good men acknowledge this, and no one denies it. The fight is chiefly over dates and chronologies and authorships. When higher criticism attacks Jesus Christ, I turn to the Second Psalm, which tells about men plotting against Jehovah, who sits in the heavens and laughs. Whatever is true and is proved to be true is part of God's revelation, and belongs to God's kingdom, and will stand forever. People's wrong opinions about scientific matters may be changed by the advancing sciences, but that never affects the truth. I can remember that my father was terribly shocked when reading books on geology, when they said that this world was not made in six little days. He thought that this was all heresy of the worst kind, almost athe-

ism. But we have found since that science is always the handmaiden of divine truth. We did not understand things as we understand them now.

But I must not go into the matter. I want merely to quiet you with the confidence I have in my own heart. Jesus Christ is your truest Friend, and you may trust everything in his hands. You need never be afraid of the vaporings of any modern critics. Christ says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Accept this truth and be at peace.

A STEP AT A TIME

LET me say to you in this letter what I tried to say to you in our little talk to-day. Do not allow the doctrinal theories about Christ's person to interfere at all with your receiving of Christ. As a teacher you know that every pupil has to begin somewhere, usually in a very vague and uncertain way, and learn little by little, line upon line, until the whole truth has been made clear. Do not think that you have been doing wrong, that, as you suggest it, you have been dishonest in not quite understanding or accepting all that your church teaches concerning the person of Christ. All that you can be expected to do is to take the

truth that is made known to you and follow it out. Indeed, I wish other people would do as you have done—think for themselves. So few people do this. The great majority of church members accept, or think they accept, just what their church teaches, asking no questions for themselves, never thinking out the articles of their creed in any personal way. I am glad that you are thinking for yourself. Even if your creed does not have as many articles in it as the creed of your church has—if you have only two or three things that you have worked out for yourself and believe because you have made personal investigation—these two or three great fundamental truths will mean far more to you than your nominal assent to a long creed, no single article of which you have ever thought through for yourself.

Let me say to you further that the true way to follow Christ is to follow him just as fast as he lights the way for you. One evening, a good many years ago, a young fellow had been talking for several hours to the president of the college where he was attending on difficulties very much like yours. The young man could not see the truth as clearly as he wanted to see it. At the close of the conversation, when the young man was leaving the door, it was very dark and he had some distance to go out into the country where he was boarding.

The president brought him a lighted lantern and gave it to him, saying, "This will light you all the way home." Then the president added, "But it will light you only a step at a time as you go on." The words were just in line with the drift of the conversation during the evening, and the young man understood what his friend meant. The lantern lighted only one step; but, as he took that step, he carried the light forward, and a second step was made clear to him, and then the third, and then the fourth, until by and by he reached the door of his own home. He had walked all the way in the light, and yet he had never been able to see more than one step in advance of his feet. This is the way you want to learn about Christ. Take your present belief and let it work its way out in your own life without hesitation. When Christ says to you, "Come unto me, . . . and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; . . . and ye shall find rest," do just what he says. Come to him, let him be your teacher, listen to his words, accept him in just the way he offers himself to you. Do not hesitate at any extent of following him, but follow his teachings at the very fullest meaning.

While you ponder these truths, be sure to let the personal Christ into your life in any way he wants to come. Simply let Christ have

his way with you. If he is to be your teacher, you are to be a faithful pupil, an earnest, sincere and true follower. As you go on, believing what he says, doing what he wants you to do, letting him come into your life as he wants to come, testing every teaching by actual faith and experience, he will guide you step by step. Live up to the light you have to-day and you will have a little more light for to-morrow. Take the step which the lantern makes light for your feet and as you go forward another step will be lighted for you. Do not worry. Do not try to force yourself into any beliefs. Jesus says, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." As you follow him you will find the light growing brighter all the time.

Remember that Christ is not merely a Saviour who died two thousand years ago, not one who lives away up above the stars in heaven and thinks of you—he is a friend right by your side, coming into your everyday life, into all your experiences, into your joys and sorrows, into your pleasures and your pain. You have no affairs in which he is not deeply interested and in which he will not help you. There are no troubles which you cannot take to him, assured that he will help you to bear them, or will relieve you of them. Make Christ more and more your close personal friend.

Replying to your question about prayer, let me say that it is not necessary for you to make a long prayer to God, telling him everything you want. Christ and you are friends, and you know that two friends may sit together for hours and ask no favors of each other, make no request. They may even sit together in silence, holding each other's hands. That is the kind of prayer Christ likes best. We may call it communing with him. You say you do not know what to pray for. Then I would say a little prayer like this:

“O Christ, my Friend, I do not know what is best for me, what I need most, what I ought to ask you to do for me, so I just put my life into thy hands and into thy loving care and leave it there. Take care of me, do for me the things that are best, make me well and strong that I may take up my duties. Take into thy skillful hands the tangles and perplexities of my life and smooth them all out in thine own best way. Keep me trustful and keep me patient, keep me submissive to thy will, and keep me songful and joyful at heart. Help me to be just the girl thou wouldst have me to be, and make my life beautiful with the beauty thou hast in thy thought for me. Prepare me for whatever thou hast in plan for me in the future. Make me strong in duty and brave in all trouble. I ask in thy precious name.”

GROWING IN GRACE

NEAR THE HEART OF CHRIST

I AM glad to find that you are so happy in your spiritual life. Sometimes people who are ill get discouraged, and their discouragement dims the brightness of their spiritual vision. As Tennyson puts it in one of his poems, the darkness gets into their heart and darkens their eyes. Many a person who is suffering from illness makes the suffering many times worse by permitting shadows to gather and obscure the face of God. I am so glad, however, that in your case your joy is not disturbed, your peace is not broken. You are living near the heart of Christ, and there you always have light about you. You remember that Jesus once said, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness." The reason he gave for this was that he himself is the light of the world. Light streams from him and all those who keep near to him find themselves in the light, however dark it may be a little way off around them.

The peace of God is a wonderful blessing. Beginning with peace with God when we come to Christ and find forgiveness, the blessing deepens, until we are kept ourselves, folded up, as it were, in God's own very peace. Few prom-

ises mean more than that one of Jesus in John 14:27—"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." It is his own peace that he bequeathed to his followers. We know what Christ's peace was—he was never disturbed. All about him storms played. The waves of trouble dashed against him. But amid all the sufferings and buffetings his heart was ever at peace. Even on the cross, when he was dying, he did not lose his peace. It was still, "My God, my God." It is very sweet to think that we may have the very peace of Christ. Paul tells us also that the peace of God will guard our heart and thoughts in Jesus Christ—that is, when we refuse to be anxious about anything and instead bring all the troubles and trials and sufferings to God in prayer. Those verses in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians are very precious. I am sure you understand them and have learned to live by them.

Then that old promise in Isaiah is wonderful—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." The keeping is God's—we cannot keep ourselves, but he can do it. Our part is simply trust—the staying of our mind upon God.

But I need not go over even these precious things, for I am sure you understand them. I merely write to remind you of them, that

you may have fresh assurance of the eternal hiding place in which you are nestling, your heart's refuge in the eternal God, your life hid with Christ.

Replying to your question, "How can one come to feel the personal presence of Christ?" I would say that we need to be careful not to depend too much upon feeling in the matter of our spiritual relations. Peter speaks of Christ as one of whom, not having seen, we love, on whom though now we see him not, yet believing we rejoice. There is a difference between a friend whom we can see, whose touch we can feel, on whose arm we can lean, whose voice we can hear, and one who is invisible to us. Yet Christ is just as near to us as the closest human friend who stands by our side, into whose face we can look, from whose spoken words we receive warmth and inspiration. As to his human body, Christ is in heaven, but he says in his last promise to his disciples, "I am with you alway."

For example, I do not see Christ while I am writing this letter to you, but I know that he is nearer to me than the closest human friend could be. I know that he is right by me, that he sees me and knows my thoughts and feelings, that he loves me and thinks about me and cheers and inspires and encourages me. So Christ has become to me the most real friend

in all the world. I try to think of him continually and always to love him as I would love him if I saw him. I tell him my difficulties and questions and temptations, my needs, and talk with him about my friends, and those who come to me for help. Thus I try to live all my life with Christ in the closest companionship.

Yet I have never seen him, never heard his voice, never felt his touch. If we believe in the existence of Christ and his presence with us, according to his promise, he will become as real to us as he was to Mary and Martha, sitting at his feet and listening to his words, or to John as he lay upon his bosom at the supper table. Such relations with Christ cannot but establish between him and us a very real and personal friendship. We are sure that he is our friend, and, believing in his love, trusting and following him, living with him, will soon lead us to love him. There is a verse in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews which says about Moses that "he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." Moses never saw God with human eyes, but God was so real to Moses that it was as if he saw him. The faith of Moses made God's presence a constant reality to him.

I am not certain that what I have said will help you directly, but I am sure this is the way to get the blessing you want to get. You must believe what Christ says about his love and

care for you, about his presence with you and his desire to help you. Your faith will thus make him a reality to you. Then you and Christ will become such close and familiar friends that you will soon learn to walk with him, to live with him.

Let me guard you against trying to have any vision of Christ, or against feeling in this matter. The craving for feeling in spiritual relations is harmful. Christ is not with us in human form. He said to Mary on that Easter Day, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father." The old natural relations were not restored. We need to guard against the same craving, for it never can be realized, but what is realized, the spiritual relation, is far higher and purer and more real.

TO ONE WHO WANTS TO GET CLOSE TO CHRIST

I AM not going to ask you to tell me anything more about your trouble than you have told me already. When you are ready for it you will open your heart to me fully. Meanwhile, let me say to you that you must open your heart to Christ. You need not fear to tell him anything that concerns you. Of course, he knows all about it, but he wants

you to tell it, nevertheless. When you read this letter will you not fall on your knees and tell Christ out of your deepest heart, in simplest, most childlike way, precisely what it is that is imperiling your life or casting a shadow over you, hiding the face of the Master from you? You say you do not get near to Christ and that it is because you will not. The reason you give is the only reason that ever keeps anyone away from the utmost closeness to the heart of the Saviour. He once said, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." He longs to have us not only come to him, but come very close to him. Christ hungers for our full confidence, for our most trusting love, and then for our most faithful obedience.

But let me say to you that there need not be a single day more of this pain or sorrow in your heart. You have only to creep back into the bosom of that Friend, who loves you more than anyone in all the world loves you. I was teaching our teachers last Monday evening the lesson for next Sunday—the Fifty-first Psalm—and I spoke particularly of the completeness, the fullness and the gladness of God's forgiveness. He not only blots out the record of our sins against us, and washes us until every stain is gone, until we are whiter than snow, but he takes us back into his own heart so speedily that it is as if we never had sinned at all.

He says, "Our sins and our iniquities he will remember no more against us forever." The very memory of our wrongdoing fades from the mind of God when he forgives us, so full is his love, so rich, so tender, so overflowing. Whatever it is, therefore, that has been in any sense hiding the face of Christ from you, put it away and be sure that you will be received into your old place, with all the infinite love of your Saviour's heart.

But I need not write more. You understand and I want you always to know with what loving interest I shall pray for you all the days until I know my letter has reached you. It will all be right, and you must not be discouraged. You must not stay a day in the shadows. Come out into the full sunlight and you will be surprised at the great joy which your heart will have.

GOD WITH HIS PEOPLE

FIRST of all I am going to send you a Bible to-day. Please accept this as a Christmas token. Nothing can be better for the day that means so much to a thoughtful heart than the Book which tells of the wonderful love of God. I will send you a Bible which has good type and which I think you

will like. It is the American Revision, and you will find it quite different in a good many words and expressions from the old King James Version, which I suppose you have used at home all your life. But I like the Revision and use it myself.

If I were to make any request of you regarding the use of this Bible, it would be that you first read over the first four Gospels in the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I would like you to read them thoughtfully and carefully, with a little prayer each day that God would help you to know Christ better and better, and to receive him into your everyday life. Many people think about Christ as a glorious Being, living far off in the brightness of heaven. This is true, of course, but it is only part of the truth. You know those lines of Browning's:

God's in his heaven,—
All's right with the world.

Certainly, God is in his heaven, but he is also right on his earth.

The experience you relate illustrates this truth. I feel, just as you do, that the coming of the trained nurse in her carriage right to the lonely spot where your sister was so ill was not a mere coincidence. I know some people would say that such a feeling as you and

I have about the matter is superstitious, or at least they would try to make us believe that it was purely accidental. But I am not disturbed by such opinions as these. More and more do I believe in the immanence of God and his personal interest and activity in the affairs of people's lives. When Jesus said to his disciples, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," he certainly meant what he said. We cannot deny the omnipresence of God. There is no spot in the world where he is not. There is a story of an atheist whose little girl attended a Sunday school, and was taught some of the simple elementary truths of the Christian religion. One day her father was writing some words for her, teaching her to spell, and wrote this—"God is nowhere." He asked the little girl if she could read the words. She spelled them out—"God is now here." The child's misreading of the father's sentence startled him and led to his own conversion. Always we can say, "God is now here."

The teaching of Christ is that he is with his own followers and friends, in a peculiar manner manifesting himself to them, as he does not manifest himself to the world. Take that saying of the Master—"The very hairs of your head are all numbered." This does not mean that God actually counts the hairs of our heads.

But the expression is meant to teach us that the smallest things in our lives, the smallest incidents, the smallest events, the smallest needs, are taken notice of by our Father, and that nothing, however little it may be, or insignificant, is overlooked or forgotten by him.

I need not go further with this defense of the belief which has such a strong place in your heart. The doctrine of the immanence of God is that he is in this world as truly as the air we breathe. Tennyson puts it, you know:

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the
plains,—

Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?
Dark is the world to thee; thyself art the reason why;
Glory about thee, without thee; and thou fulfillest thy doom,
Making him broken gleams, and a stifled splendor and
gloom.

Speak to him thou, for he hears, and Spirit with Spirit can
meet;

Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands and
feet.

We are all the time in the presence of God. In him we live and move and have our being. Then God loves us. We are his children. If the name "Father" applied to God has any meaning at all, it must mean more than the word "father" or "mother" means as applied to our human relationships. Can we say that our heavenly Father is less kind, less thought-

ful, less compassionate, less attentive to the needs of his children than human fathers and mothers are to the needs of their children?

I am sure, therefore, that the incident which you described as occurring last summer was really an expression of God's thought and care of you and your sister in your dire need. The Old Testament tells about Hagar and her child—when the child was dying of thirst, and the mother could do nothing but sit by and listen to her child's cries, an angel came and showed her a spring of water. The teaching of the Bible is not that God is always working miracles for us. He helps us first in natural ways, through our own strength or wit or wisdom or ingenuity, or through the interposition of our friends. But when no human help is available, then God comes himself.

UNDERNEATH ARE THE EVERLASTING ARMS

I WRITE to you a little note at once, before you leave your old home. I am sorry that you have had so much care and anxiety in preparing for your change of residence. I hope that everything is settled now and that you will have nothing further to disturb or distract you. I wish I were near enough to you

to be of some little use to you, for I should love to help you in your life. All I can do at this distance, however, is to speak to God for you in prayer, asking him to give you quietness and confidence and peace, and then to write to you whenever you wish me to do so, to say my word of encouragement and uplifting to you.

The sweetest life is the one that nestles the most quietly and unquestioningly in the hands of God. I always like that picture of John which we have at the Last Supper, when he leaned upon Christ's breast. It seems such an ideal place for anyone to lean. Especially it is a place in which those who are suffering, those who are weak and broken in health, those who have any sorrow or care, may nestle. There is a verse, too, in the Old Testament which seems to belong under this picture as a sort of legend—"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Embracing arms suggest a father's love or the love of a very dear and trusted friend. It is very sweet for a child to nestle thus in the arms of father and mother. The embrace suggests not only affection, but support, protection, shelter, secure keeping. The strongest and gentlest human arms will some day fall away, unclasping their embrace. But the arms of God are "everlasting." Nothing can ever unbind them from us. Nothing can ever snatch

us out of those arms. We know that when once enfolded in the love of God we shall be kept there forever. Whatever human arms may have dropped away from their embrace of you, or may hereafter drop away, you know that the arms of God will always enfold you in warm, tender, strong affection. Another precious word in this old text is the word "underneath." The arms are always underneath. No matter how low one sinks away in suffering, or weakness, or pain, or trial, still and always underneath are the everlasting arms.

I want you to feel that God's love is everlasting, that his grace is eternal, that the protection you have in him is something that never can be disturbed. Earth's nests are all liable to be torn to pieces, for nothing here is stable and sure. Even the giant mountain peaks shall molder away. But the love of God remains ever the same. Here is another text which you will like: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

Excuse my little sermon, but I want to help to give you strength and confidence when you have had so much to perplex and disturb you. Do not be afraid of anything. God is taking care of you. Read the One hundred and twenty-

first Psalm the day you move—it is sometimes called “The Traveler’s Psalm.”

REFUGE IN CHRIST

I AM glad to have your letter this morning and to know that you are now settled in your new home and are coming to feel comfortable and at home there. I wish it were Philadelphia instead of New York where you are staying, that I might see you now and then and do what little I could do to give you cheer and encouragement. As it is, however, I assure you of loving remembrance. It is very sweet just to nestle down in the hands of Christ, to be a little child with him. That is what he says Christians are to be. Those who come otherwise do not get near to him, but the little children always find a close place in his heart. So the more like children we can be in our trust and in the simplicity of our faith, in humbleness of disposition, in willingness to do his will and to learn of him—the nearer to him shall we get and the more shall we enjoy of his love.

Some years since, as I was passing along one of our streets one afternoon, I heard a fluttering of birds over my head and, looking up, saw a little bird flying wildly about in circles, chased by a hawk. The bird flew down lower

and lower and presently darted into my bosom, under my coat. I cannot express to you quite the feeling which filled my heart at that moment, that a little bird, chased by an enemy, had come to me for refuge, trusting me in time of danger. I laid my hand over the bird, which nestled as quietly and confidently under my coat as a baby would in a mother's bosom. I carried the little thing along for several blocks until I thought the way was clear of danger, and then let it out. It flew away into the air again, but showed no fear of me. Ever since that experience I have understood better what it is to fly into the bosom of Christ for refuge and for safety in time of danger, or in time of distress. The lines of the old hymn have meant more ever since :

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly."

Nothing gives me more joy than when persons come to me in distress, in anxiety, in trouble, or in helplessness, seeking for counsel, for friendship, for shelter, for help. Many persons have come very much as the bird came that afternoon. All this helps me to understand better what it means to Jesus Christ when we, hunted and chased by enemies, or suffering from weakness or pain, fly to him and hide ourselves in his love.

That is what I am sure you have learned to do—just to creep into the bosom of Christ, and lie down there, with no fear, no anxiety, but with simple trust. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”

I am glad that the One hundred and twenty-first Psalm has meant more to you since you read it the day you went to New York. I take the liberty of sending you a copy of my booklet on this Psalm—“Unto the Hills.” It may help to fix some of the thoughts of the Psalm still more firmly in your memory.

GLORIFYING SELF AND GLORIFYING GOD

IT seems to me as I read your letter over carefully the second time that you are needlessly anxious about the matter concerning which you write. Of course I understand that the Christian must always put Christ first and think of him in all his life. One of Paul’s words says, “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” That is, if we love Christ truly, we will want to do everything for him, to honor his name, to bless him, to extend the influence of his love among others. Of course, this being true, we should

not live for ourselves, to get glory for our own name, to bring honor and reward to ourselves.

Jenny Lind used to say, "I sing to God." Her heart was so full of love for God that she thought only of him in her singing, not of herself. At the same time, we know that there gathered about her own head wonderful honor, as thousands and thousands of people listened to her and were filled with rapture as they heard her sing. Or take any eloquent preacher. As he preaches, men and women are drawn to him and wait upon his words with admiration and enthusiasm. Of course, he is honored, but if he is a true man he lays all the honor down at the feet of Christ. No one who lives successfully can help receiving honor for himself. One who writes beautiful poems makes a name for himself, a name which lives in the world and shines wherever it is known. Of course, it is possible for the person to do all this for his own glory, with no thought at all of Christ. This is not the way to live. But it is possible for such a person, winning the acclamations and plaudits of the world, to be as humble as a little child. For example, Rev. Reginald J. Campbell spent a day with me a few weeks ago. He spoke twice in Philadelphia. You know of him. He is under forty years of age, but he has won a wonderful name for himself in Lon-

don and throughout England. Coming to this country, he has preached in all our large cities during the summer, and every place great throngs have waited upon him, and he has received commendations everywhere. But I never saw a more simple-hearted man than he is. As he sat here in my office and we talked together, he appeared to be utterly unconscious of the fact that he was talked about everywhere, and that his name was praised by thousands and thousands of people. He loves Christ, he lives for Christ. Every word he speaks is meant to honor Christ by helping others.

This, as I understand it, is the solution of the perplexity which you bring to me. I see no reason why anyone should decline to use his own name when he writes beautiful things. Indeed, I believe we owe it to our Master to let our name grow to mean as much as possible. There is tremendous influence in a name. If one writes a book or does good in other ways and his name goes out over the world, it grows to mean a great deal to all who love it. If there is no Christ in the man's heart this is all mere worldliness, but if he loves Christ, that beautiful name, with all its honor, glorifies Christ himself.

Coming back to your own question, therefore, it seems to me you should rejoice in the privilege that Christ gives you, and thank him

for the ability he has bestowed upon you, that you may write beautiful things which will honor your Master and carry comfort and cheer and encouragement to the hearts of the people. Do not be afraid that Christ is jealous of the honor that comes to you. Indeed, he rejoices in it and seeks to have the honor grow brighter and brighter, as long as you use it all to make his name more glorious, to spread the influence of his love among people, and to help other lives.

Remember this also, that Christ does not care for mere glory and honor in itself. What he wants is that we may make his name known to people, that blessing may come to them through his teachings. The only true way of showing our love for Christ is by loving others in his name, interpreting his love to them. Your mission, therefore, in the world, is to tell people all you can of the love of Christ, of his goodness, his compassion, his kindness, his patience, his mercy, that they may learn to love him too, and that they may receive from him the comfort and the joy and the peace and the blessing which you have received and which have made your life so beautiful.

PRAYER PROBLEMS

THE JOY OF TALKING WITH GOD

I AM glad to have your letter this morning, and especially so because it is so full of encouragement and good cheer. You know I think that good cheer is not only half of every beautiful life, but when one is sick is fully half of the cure. Always keep your face toward the light, toward hope. Never yield to discouragement, whatever the circumstances may be.

I write to you to-day especially to try to answer the question which you raise with regard to prayer. You say that in the past, when you have prayed, you have finished it with a feeling of relief, as if you said, "Well, I am glad that is done." The difficulty, it seems to me, is in this, that prayer has been to you a sort of task, something that needed to be done merely as a duty, something in which there was a merit in the act and not in the real experience. I want to help you if I can possibly do so to get away from all this feeling.

Let me illustrate. If you have a very dear friend, do you not like to sit down and talk with him quietly now and then? Do you regard it as a task, or a pleasure? Take your husband, for example, the closest and best friend. When you have your little talk in the

morning before he goes to business, when it is over do you heave a sigh of relief and say, "I am glad that's over"? Then in the evening, when he comes in from his duties, and you sit down together for a quiet hour at the dinner table or for your evening talk, do you have the same feeling? Does it seem to you that you are simply fulfilling a duty, something that you have to do because you are his wife? I am sure this is not the case. You enter with zest and gladness into the little talks. You never think of fixing periods for conversation merely because you happen to be his wife. If this were the case, your marriage would be simply a farce.

The same is true in a measure of every good friend, everyone you love. It gives you great joy to have talks with them. Or if there is some one you care for and who is able to help you in your difficulties and your troubles, and you write to this person, is it a task—something you are glad to get through with? Or do you take delight in it? Is it a pleasure to you to write your letter unburdening your heart, asking your questions, and then again to read the letters which come in response?

I need not apply this. What I want to help you to understand is that Christ is your truest and best friend. Much as your husband loves you, pure and true and strong as his affection

is, Christ's love is deeper, stronger, tenderer, more gentle. Then you, being a Christian, are Christ's friend. That is, you have accepted his love, letting him into your heart, and have begun to love him in return. Religion really narrows itself down to a single statement—"Christ and I are friends." If you think of this a little, and begin to realize what Christ is to you, you will not look upon prayer any longer as something to be done, merely as a devotee twirls her beads on the string saying her little prayers, but as a joy, a delight. Prayer is simply your little talk with Christ, as you would sit down with any dear, tender, close and trusted human friend for a little talk.

Of course the friendship is not equal—for Christ is infinitely stronger than you, wiser than you and greater, and you come to him for help, to lay your burdens upon him, to bring questions to him, to seek strength and comfort from him. For example, just now he is your true Physician. However much you may trust the doctors who are caring for you, remember always that all healing is divine healing, that human physicians, with all their wisdom and skill, can do nothing save as Christ blesses the means they use. You go to him, therefore, to ask him to take charge of your case, to bless the physicians and the means they use. Then you go to him for other things also—for comfort,

for encouragement, for cheer. John lay upon Christ's bosom, nestling there on that dark night of his sorrow, when he knew the Master was to be taken away from him. That is the way you may rest, nestling in the bosom of Christ, infolded by his strong arms.

I have said enough now to help you to think this matter through for yourself. I am sure when you realize that Christ and you are friends, close, tender friends—that Christ is your infinite helper as well as your Saviour—you will not have any more trouble in praying. You will be eager to sit down at his feet, as Mary sat, listening to his words, or to lie upon his breast, as John did, catching every whisper that fell from his lips.

SHALL WE PRAY FOR THE HEALING OF DISEASE?

I AM glad to read your letter over, and yet I am very sorry for the things that are causing you added anxiety. It certainly must be very sad for you all to have the little child grow worse again, thus disappointing so many fond hopes.

You ask about prayer in such cases. There is always a difficulty in making oneself understand, or even in formulating our own be-

liefs on the subject of prayer when matters like sickness are concerned. There is no question whatever that God hears all our prayers. He is our Father, and no human father in the world was ever so truly interested in any of his children as God is in each one of us. Jesus said, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." We are sure, therefore, that in one sense God does not need to be told anything about our lives. He hears the prisoner's sigh, and the twittering of the sparrows when they are hungering for food on the winter days. With regard to the answer, however, we must remember that God is wise as well as good. He takes in, not merely the present day and to-morrow, but also the future. He never gives us a mess of pottage at the cost of our birthright. He never allows us to take from the treasury of his blessings a temporal good or gift which will imperil our future spiritual good. He is too kind not to cause us pain, when pain is the best thing for us. This is about all I can say on this matter. The teaching, however, is this, that we should trust the wisdom of God to decide the manner of the answer to prayer quite as much as we trust the love of God for sympathy and tenderness in our suffering.

There is something else to say also. No doubt there is a great deal of what may be called

vicarious suffering in this world. If you read the story of Job you will learn that it was not particularly for his own sanctification that the trouble came upon him, but for the confuting of Satan's accusations or charges, and the witnessing before the world to the power of God's grace to sustain and strengthen. We look with broken-hearted compassion upon a suffering child. Over and over again when I have sat by such a child, watching its anguish and pain, my heart has been most deeply stirred, and I have been led to ask, "Why must this child suffer in this way?" There was no reason in the child that I could see. Yet I have seen over and over again a whole household not only brought to Christ but enriched in spiritual life, and blessed immeasurably through the suffering of a little child. I knew a young girl who had the very trouble of which your sister's child is suffering—"white swelling." Year after year until perhaps she was eighteen, this child suffered most excruciating anguish. She clung to me very fondly as I often went in to see her to say something cheerful to her and make a little prayer by her bedside. I would not attempt to-day to give a reason why this innocent, sweet, beautiful child was permitted to suffer during those six or seven years until she died. I can only say that one of the results of that suffering was the enriching of the

whole household in a most wondrous way. She has been dead now for thirteen or fourteen years, but the memory of her beautiful face and sweet spirit—her patience and peace and love,—lingers in the hearts of her father and mother. Only yesterday a letter came to me from the father, on a little business matter, and in it he referred to the invalid, as he always does and as the mother always does when they write to me or when I meet them. I can testify that for myself the ministry upon that child was an education. I think few things in all my experience ever have affected me so deeply, have left plainer or more indubitable marks upon my character, than her sweet life left.

I merely give you this incident to help you to understand my answer about prayer. God does not promise to answer all prayers in a literal way at once. We must submit our prayers to his wisdom, asking him to do the thing that is best. It may be best for the child to suffer, for who knows what childhood's suffering may do in the preparation of a spirit for service near God's throne, ages and ages hence? The only true thought of life which I can get is that which thinks of it as one continuous existence, not limited by seventy or eighty years at the most, but stretching on beyond into the eternities. We say a child lives in vain if it is sick for ten or twelve or fourteen years and then

dies of a long, agonizing illness. No, we dare not say that. Some people even call God cruel because he permits such suffering in an innocent and beautiful child. But here again we know not what to say. I believe that life in this world is at best only a preparation for future existence. If I am spared for sixty or seventy or eighty years, and then go home, what I have passed through in this world in the way of suffering, of struggle, of defeat, of victory, of joy or of sorrow will all go into the preparation for my real life, which will begin the morning after I get home to heaven, and go on forever. So we cannot say, we dare not say, that any child's anguish and pain are in vain, or that the life which is filled with such experiences here is in any sense a useless life. The suffering purifies the spirit, lifts up the heart toward God, makes the character stronger and truer, and gives new tenderness and new sympathy to the person.

Then who can tell what the influence may be upon the loved ones who stand about the child's bed and witness its sufferings? While their hearts are breaking with sympathy and anguish, if they keep near Christ their very suffering will help to sweeten their own lives and fit them for larger, better service. Nothing draws out the best things in life as care for a suffering one does. Many a mother is made

angelic in her spirit, Christlike, almost divine, by being called to minister, month after month, in the sick room of her own child.

Let me now answer the question about prayer—that God does always hear prayer if the prayer be sincere and true. And also that he answers prayer not always literally in a physical sense. We can breathe up our prayers to God and know that they will be answered in the best way. One of the most beautiful pictures in the book of Revelation is that of the “vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints,” which John saw. The picture suggests first that all prayer is fragrant to God—odors; and, second, that the prayers that rise to heaven are not lost, even though not answered immediately. They are kept as in vials, before God, in safety, until the time comes for their answering.

What you and I want, therefore, is not only a simple faith but also a large faith, taking in all time and all eternity, a faith not only in the wonderful love of God but also in the wisdom of God.

You will understand that I have been thinking a great deal about your sister as I have read your letter and dictated these words. My prayer goes up to God for her that her faith may be strengthened and that her own heart may be sweetened and enriched by the grace of

God, as she keeps her loving mother-watch about her suffering child.

Do not let me give the impression that God never answers prayer for healing. I think he does. I think that all healing is wrought by Christ. We must always send for the physician and use all the means within our reach, for this is ordinarily God's way of helping us. But we fail if when using the means we do not also pray to God. The best means are of no avail unless God uses them and blesses them. While, therefore, we have the physician and employ all available skill and use every means within our power to bring back restored health, we must take the case to God and leave it ever in his hands.

WHY PRAYER IS NOT ANSWERED

WITH regard to this whole matter of recovery, I assure you of loving interest. All your friends are eager to have you restored to health. I thoroughly sympathize with you and have prayed very much for you all along these months since I have known you, that God would make you strong and well again, if it be his will.

I would like to help you, however, into the sweetest and most perfect faith. The trouble

sometimes is that people who are sick pray for health and do not yield up their life to Christ. Health is very important, but the first thing for you is the entire surrender of your life into the hands of Jesus Christ. Health is only one of the accessories of life—life itself is far more important. This is what Christ wants. He wants your heart. He wants the surrender of yourself to him. He wants you to take him without any question, not only as your Saviour, but as your Master. This means that you will trust all your affairs to him, and think very little about them. Please remember, therefore, it is you, yourself, that Christ wants first of all—that he wants you to yield your heart, your will, your whole life, with all its affairs, its questions, and everything, to him. The promises I have given you all mean this. For example, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.” This does not refer merely to the healing of the body, to restoration to health—it refers, first of all, to yourself. You are to let yourself down upon the love and power of Christ, staying your mind upon him. Then he will keep you in perfect peace.

I do not know what God’s plans for you may be. I hope that he has long life for you, that you may be restored to be a hearty woman, with vigorous health, that you may be for many

years a happy wife, building up a home with your husband, a home which will be a blessing to many others. What I am trying to help you to understand is that you must give yourself to Christ at the same time, even before you ask for health. Then you need not be afraid to intrust everything into the hands of him who knows you and loves you better than any human friend can possibly do.

I know people, for instance, who are not Christians at all, who never think of serving Christ, who have not given themselves to him in any sense, who even are living a worldly and, perhaps, a sinful life, yet when they are sick they pray God to make them well and get very vehement and earnest in their praying. You see at once the unreasonableness of this sort of living. Christ makes no promises to answer prayer to us until we have submitted ourselves to him entirely. You are a Christian woman, I believe—you have united with the Church, I think. Have you surrendered your whole life to Christ? Are you trusting him as your only Saviour? Are you taking his commandments as the rule of your life, living lovingly, purely, unselfishly, honestly, truthfully—doing the things which he commands you? He says, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” Think of these words—they will tell you what it is to be a Christian.

What I want to do is to help you to make an entire surrender of your will, your heart, your conscience, your whole life to Christ, that he may fill your heart with his love and make you a new woman. The most important thing for you is not that you shall get strong physically and live to be sixty or seventy years old. The most important thing is that you shall give up your life to Christ, to be his and his alone. Then you can pray for the recovery of your health, but always submissively, saying, "Not my will, but thine, be done."

GETTING THE MASTERY OVER SIN

IF you were here and I could talk to you now and then and offer a little prayer to God with you and for you, I am sure I could do very much more for you than I can merely through letters. But I want to help you in every way. Especially do I want to help you to be strong. Remember that the divine keeping which is promised to us depends upon ourselves far more than we sometimes think. We ask God to keep us, and then we let ourselves drift along in the old way and think our prayers have not been answered and that God has not done for us what he promises to do. We forget that we must get the mastery of our desires

and feelings if we would get God's help. The old maxim which says, "God helps those who help themselves" is perfectly true. For instance, there is no use in our praying God to provide for our bodily wants, if we are strong and do not lift a hand to earn the bread we ask God to give to us. So when we ask that we may be kept from doing wrong, we must resolve to stand like a rock in the path of right, resisting all evil.

I get letters very often in which the writers tell me that somehow they do not get answers to their prayers when they ask God to keep them from doing wrong. The reason is that their prayers are not accompanied by any real effort to do the thing they ask God to help them to do. Remember that Christ does not destroy our desires, our feelings, our appetites, our passions. Buddha's teaching was that desire must die, that our appetites and passions must be crushed and destroyed. Christ taught a different way—not the crushing and the destroying of our natural longings and desires, but the satisfying of them in the right way. You remember he said that he that drinketh of this water, that is, of God's grace and love, shall never thirst, and that the water he takes will become a living well in him, springing up into everlasting life. You will find that Christ never says a word in all the gospel about crush-

ing our feelings and desires—he wants us to bring all these heart yearnings to him, and he promises to satisfy them from his own fullness and in his own service.

The truest way for us to get the mastery over anything wrong is to turn all the power of our life toward the doing of something beautiful and good. If you will seek opportunities to help others, using your pent-up affections and feelings in this sacred service, you will find that they will be satisfied and more than satisfied. If you yield to a wrong desire, even for a little while, it leaves bitterness in your heart afterwards. But if you turn that same natural longing into a channel of helpfulness to others and honor to Christ, you will find the satisfaction far deeper and joy instead of bitterness as a result. We must think of ourselves as the children of God. If you realize that you are God's child, Christ's redeemed one, and that your life must be kept for Christ, and that you must live worthy of him who died for you and worthy of the high calling to which he calls you, you cannot but rise into a worthy, wholesome, natural and well-balanced character. You remember Tennyson's words:

Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,—
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.

You ask me the meaning of the words,
“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temp-

tation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." One lesson from the words is that we must watch ourselves, watch against the smallest beginnings of wrong, watch against the alluring temptations which come to us—watch as well as pray—the very thing I have been saying to you. Temptation is not a sin in itself. We all are tempted. Christ himself was tempted. Indeed, we are continually required to make our choice between the right and the wrong. When some one speaks sharply to us there is a temptation to retort in like tone. We have not sinned, however, in experiencing the temptation. But if we yield to it and speak sharply and bitterly and resentfully, we have sinned. If, however, we resist the temptation, control ourselves and speak patiently and kindly, or keep silent, we have not sinned. So whatever the particular temptation may be, the same is true. There is no sin in being tempted—but sin begins the moment we yield to the temptation.

It seems to me it should help us to resist temptation to think of the debasing effects of sin, and of the bitterness which it leaves in the life after it has been committed.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS

THE CHOICE OF AMUSEMENTS

JUST how a Christian should treat the subject of amusements is usually a difficult matter to decide. In general, I would say that Christians never need fear devoting themselves too heartily or too fully to the Master. I say to my people that the question, rather, should not be, "Can I do this and this and still be a Christian?" but, "How fully and devotedly can I serve Christ?" One need never fear going too far in the way of self-denial and holy living. The danger lies the other way.

At the same time I recognize the necessity for amusements. We must have recreation. I am sure that Christ approves of proper amusements. The person who never finds time to laugh is going to grow very dull after a while. Both for physical and mental health it is necessary for us to unbend. Just what the amusement shall be, however, is the question which requires careful thought.

I have always said to young people that the test of amusements lies in themselves. I hold that Christians should live with Christ, should always walk with Christ in close fellowship, and that anything that breaks this communion or interferes with the sweetness of their relations with their Master is hurting them.

That is to say, for example, if they find that certain books fill their minds with thoughts and feelings which interfere with the sweetness of their fellowship with Christ, they would better not read these books. If they find that certain companions are drawing their minds away from Christ, and hindering them in their complete devotion to him, they would better not permit these companionships. If dancing starts thoughts and feelings which hinder one in prayer, it is better not to dance. If card-playing has a like injurious effect upon their spiritual life, they would better give it up. The first thing is to be a Christian of the Christ-type, and whatever interferes with this should be cut off and plucked out though it be as dear as a right hand or an eye. This evidently is our Lord's teaching. We are to go through life meeting all the experiences of life, business, society, friendship, reading, associations, as well as joys and sorrows, so as not to be hurt by any of these things. In fact, we are to make all things minister to our upbuilding of character and the strengthening of our Christian life.

Perhaps I have said all I should say in the way of answer to your questions. Christ himself never gave detailed instructions, but instead laid down great principles by which his followers should live.

In your present condition of mind, after listening to the revival sermons you refer to, I suppose your mind is open to see whatever there may be of harm to you in the things you have been trained to do. Whether you should revolutionize your own life now in this matter, you must decide for yourself. Paul says that "he that doubteth is condemned." This means, as I understand it, that if we do a thing the expediency and rightfulness of which we are not sure of, we have sinned, even though the thing itself be not morally wrong. If you are uncertain about the duty of dancing and card-playing and theater-going, it seems to me that all you can do is to deny yourself those pleasures. You certainly would not be happy in any of them if you are not entirely clear in your own mind concerning your duty.

There is another element in the discussion, however, to which you refer. What will be the influence of your indulgence in certain amusements upon other young people who look to you for example? You represent Christ—you cannot get away from this responsibility. The fact that you bear the Christian name makes you stand for Christ wherever you go. Even if these things are not wrong in themselves, what influence will you exert upon those who are just beginning the Christian life, if you indulge in them? Paul laid down the principle that

the things that are perfectly harmless in themselves must be given up by Christians, under the law of love, if the doing of these things causes a weak brother to stumble. I say very frankly that I have gone upon this principle myself in a great many things which I believe to be harmless but not necessarily duties. I have asked the question, "If I indulge in this or that, what will be my influence upon persons who look to me for example?" I cannot tell you what a pressure upon my own life the consciousness that so many people turn to me for counsel and for example has grown to be along the years. I receive letters every day from all over the world referring to my books, and asking questions about this or that. The fact that the writers treat me in this way, and get help from my words, sets me apart in a most sacred way and makes the obligation upon me to live a true and holy Christian life very strong indeed. There are those who look to you and to whom the failure of your life in their eyes would be a calamity.

I have a friend who is a most devoted Christian, one of the most active and useful Christian men in this country. He has always insisted upon his right to have wine at his table for dinner. A great many of his friends with different views have remonstrated with him on the subject, but without avail. He holds that

he has a perfect right to take his glass of wine and to furnish it to his guests at his table, and that in doing so he is following Christ as closely as if he should take the extreme course on the other side. I know another man with precisely the same view as to his personal life, who formerly followed the same rule with regard to wine on his table. But several years ago he had in his house for a good part of a year a guest, a young man, who had never been accustomed to drink, but who accepted it when offered at the table. Before many months passed, this gentleman saw that the young man was losing control of himself, and was drinking too much. He saw at once the danger in which he was placing his young friend, and instantly put away from his table the wine. He has never used it since and says he never will use it. He made the renouncement because he saw that the drinking might harm his young friend. This, I think, is a very worthy giving up of a custom which he had practiced all his life. There was a reason for it, a strong motive. I think, therefore, that the man has risen into a higher Christian life, not because he does not have wine any more at his table, but because he made the sacrifice for the sake of saving others.

I am sure that Christ is just as much displeased with other forms of pleasure as he is

with indulgence in the way of amusements. I know a man who is a very strict Sabbath-keeper. He will not ride on the street cars, he will not have his shoes blacked, he insists upon reducing his household cares, cooking, and so forth, to the very lowest possible degree. He rather prides himself on being a very strict observer of the Lord's day. Yet I know from painful personal experience that this man fails in honesty in many ways. He is always borrowing money and does not repay it. He is very careless about keeping his promises. He is most severe and most censorious in his judgment of other men who do not follow his views with regard to Sunday observance. I am sure, therefore, that his piety in the one direction is not a true index of his character. It is simply a bit of Pharisaism in him which makes his other failures in duty and character all the more marked. We want a religion which fills the heart, absorbs the life, and leads one into the sweetest fellowship with the Master and devotion to his service. The one duty which comprises all other duties is to love. Jesus said that all his disciples should love one another. By this men should know that they were his followers. No amount of church-going or attendance at Dorcas meetings, or work in temperance meetings, or missionary meetings will ever excuse a woman from being gentle, sweet, loving toward

her husband and children and her servants—all her household.

If you are ready to take the step which you suggest as possibly your duty, I think that you will be a very much happier woman. You will never be sorry for the self-denial you will practice in giving up these indulgences which evidently, even to your own mind, are questionable. You ask me to help you. If you are ready for this consecration I should like to lead you in it. You are sure that you will do no wrong in cutting off these things from your life. You would have no less comfortable health at the end of the next year. You would be no less strong intellectually. You would be no less a noble and worthy woman. That is, while there may be a loss of pleasure at certain points, there will be no real loss, from your pursuing such a course. On the other hand, if you are ready to take this course, and do it heartily, through love for Christ and his cause, and through love for those who look to you for example, you will find rich blessing. The hand of Christ will rest upon you in new benediction and you will become richer in your spiritual life, will have more power in prayer, will have more peace in your heart, and your influence will be sweeter and further-reaching.

Remember, I am not saying that you should do this—your doing it because I would advise

it would not be the right kind of course for you to pursue. If you are ready to do it you must do it because in your own heart you think that Christ wants you to do it. I do not say that you would not be a Christian woman if you continued your moderate indulgence in these amusements—I am merely saying that there are higher degrees even in Christian life. There are Christians, and those who are better Christians, and those who are the best Christians. I read a letter which a Christian Chinaman wrote home from San Francisco some years since. He was telling his friends there about certain petty persecutions which he and his people were suffering from the white people. He said, “The worst of it is these people are Christians—but not Jesus-Christians.” If you want to be a Jesus-Christian, the way is open for you, and I believe that you will never be sorry if you take the step into the higher experience and the nobler and fuller consecration.

TO ONE AMBITIOUS TO WRITE STORIES

I WISH you lived in Philadelphia that I might help you directly in your personal life and in your literary work. However, as this is not possible, I shall help you very cheerfully and gladly and as efficiently as pos-

sible at this long range. If you desire to have me look over the story which you have written, I shall take pleasure in doing so. It may be that I cannot do it very promptly, for I am very busy. Besides being an editor and busy in literary work every day of the week, I am also a pastor, with a church to which I devote all my evenings and my Sundays. I shall have to look over your story, therefore, in some little break between times, but I shall take pleasure in doing so for you because of my deep interest in your life. I do not profess, however, to be very much of a critic. At the same time, I have learned to know pretty well what kind of story is apt to be interesting enough to get itself read; and also the kind of story that it is really worth while to have young people or others read.

In our work there are two phases of testing. Every story must be good in a literary way. That is, it must be a piece of art, must be well written, must be bright, interesting and attractive, so that those who read the first paragraph cannot stop, but will be compelled to go on. In these days it is impossible to get people to read stories that drag or are dull. The second thing necessary is that there must be some helpful teaching in the story. I do not mean that preaching must be dragged in nor the moral tacked on, but that every story must have

some motive, must teach something that will be helpful, inspiring, uplifting. This teaching must appear in the conduct, the disposition, or the outcome of the story itself, as I have said, and must not merely be attached as an "application" in an old-fashioned sermon.

I am not trying to discourage you. I am sure that you have learned some things in life which it is worth while for you to teach to others and worth while for them to read. As you say, your time has been occupied in other things, in loving ministry for Christ. You must not chide yourself, therefore, nor feel discouraged because you have not had the opportunity to develop your literary work or to write much in the way of practice. Do not get the impression that your life is idly spent when you are doing such sweet service as you have been doing. Remember the commendation that Jesus gave to Mary—"She hath done what she could." You bring your alabaster box to Christ whenever you bring him your heart's love, whatever the form of service may be. If you have time and opportunity for literary work, he will accept that when you have acquired the necessary preparation for it. If you have not time for this kind of work, but are required to devote all your service to others, know deep down in your heart that nothing in the world you could do will be so pleasing to your Master.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO COMMON SERVICE

I LIKE to think we do not only our spiritual acts, but even the work of our common days for Christ; that he accepts even the lowliest taskwork as holy service when we do it in his name and to please him. When Jesus said, referring to his Father, "I do always those things that please him," he had in mind not only his preaching and miracle-working and the comforting of the people, but also everything else that belonged to his life. He had the same thought in his mind during the first thirty years, when he was a child, a boy, a young man, in Nazareth, when he was working at the carpenter's bench, or when he was engaged in other tasks and duties. You are just as much working for Christ during the hours when you are in the office, with your quick pen and your busy brain, as you are when on Sunday you take up your church work and do that. He is interested in all that you think or say or do, and is pleased when you do even the lowliest, commonest things in his name and conscious of his eye upon you.

Evidently God has given you the capacity, as well as the opportunity, for doing sweet and beautiful things for the Master. This is the

highest honor that could be conferred upon you. I think the work which will count for most in the end, when God reckons up the services of his children, will not be that of those who have wrought in conspicuous places, with the huzzas and plaudits of the world ringing in their ears, but the work of the lowly ones, toiling in obscurity, hearing no word of commendation, receiving no human approval, yet going on patiently, sweetly, beautifully, day after day, doing their tasks just as cheerfully, as conscientiously, and as well as if they were working for the eyes of a million people.

You do not know what possibilities of usefulness and helpfulness God has put into your life. The way to develop these possibilities is just to go quietly and faithfully on, day after day, doing the things which come to your hand each day, and doing them all sweetly and well. God never leads us into large places by jumps. Heaven is not gained by sudden bounds. We must climb up step by step to gain the lofty heights. The way to reach the larger service is to do the humbler and lowlier as they come to us. The old motto, "Doe ye nexte thyng," contains a world of wisdom. If we always do the next thing it will lead us to another next thing and this to another, and so on, each one lifting our feet a little higher, leading us into a little wider field. I love to think of the divine

guidance somewhat after the fashion of that verse in the Psalm which says:

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
And light unto my path."

You notice the word is lamp or lantern only—not a sun, a radiating hemisphere, but a little light we carry in our hand which brightens only one step at a time.

You have your present duties and your present experiences. Be just the best, truest, noblest girl you can be, and the sweetest, most trusting, most loving Christian, doing the common task-work of these common days just as beautifully as if you were a princess, bearing great responsibilities. Thus God will make your life a blessing and lead you on to whatever larger things he may have for you to do. But I am sure that you will always keep in mind this truth, that the largest sphere in this world is not the sphere of publicity, where human applause is heard, but the sphere of service, where you can do good to others about you.

WHEN OUR SERVICE IS INTERRUPTED

I AM sorry to learn that you have been so ill, but I am glad to know that you are better again. I think you have been quite right in laying aside part of your work, for

God's service is never meant to be unreasonable or exacting. Of course, there are times when we have to make very serious self-sacrifices in doing the work of the Master, but, ordinarily, we are not required to injure health or shorten life, even in the doing of the things which our heart prompts us to do. I am sure that other persons will be led to take up the burden in Sunday-school work which you have laid down. Meanwhile you want to rest.

I believe that the true idea of Sabbath-keeping is that the day shall be a restful one in every way, leaving us in renewed strength and freshened in mind and invigorated in body for the work of the week which is to begin again Monday morning. A Sunday which does not leave us in this condition has ordinarily not been a well-kept Sunday. I hope that you will find your rest from your classwork conducive to your best health in every way, and that the work itself will not suffer through your laying it down for the present.

I am very glad, indeed, to have given the least cheer and comfort to your friend. I am deeply interested in all persons who, like her, are bearing burdens and for whom others are not likely to care. Long since I chose as one of the aims of my life to help those whom nobody else is likely to help, to do the things nobody else would be likely to do, to turn my

thought toward the services which no other one would incline to take up. It has led me into many experiences of great gladness. Very many of my happiest experiences have been with those who seem to have been set aside by the world. If we are God's children, we need to be very careful lest we assume to be superior to some other one of our family who stands right beside us. With God all are alike save that he, too, shows the deepest sympathy and the largest helpfulness to those who need the most. I am sure that the unappreciated people of this world are often the ones whom Christ appreciates the most. I am very glad to assure your friend, therefore, of my sincere personal friendship and my desire to help her in her life. Tell her to keep near to Christ, for in him she will always find sweetest sympathy and the strongest helpfulness.

For yourself, in your condition of somewhat enfeebled health, let me speak also a word of cheer and encouragement. I am sure that you want to live a victorious life, not simply in the meeting of temptation, but also in the bearing of life's ills or infirmities. Long since I adopted two little rules which I have tried to carry out in my own life. One is never to be discouraged. The other is never to be a discourager. The first, some people say, is impossible, but I have not found it so. Of course, there are countless

things in everyone's life which come as heavy burdens, as sorrows, as keen disappointments. Nothing would be easier than to yield to these disheartening things. Very much depends upon habit. If one begins to yield to them, one will keep on in the yielding and, by and by, life will be simply a continuous series of defeats. But far better is it to form the habit of never yielding to discouragement. I think we should treat discouragement as a temptation. It is the Devil trying to get us to confess our weakness, to confess ourselves beaten and thus to give up in the battle for strength and nobleness or in the doing of our duty. It ought not to be impossible for a Christian, therefore, to learn never to be discouraged. That is what Jesus meant when he said, "In the world ye shall have tribulations: but . . . I have overcome the world," and "in me ye might have peace." In Christ we may always be overcomers—"more than conquerors through him that loved us."

As I have intimated before this, victory must come through a habit of mind. We must begin to stand against the encroachments of discouragement. The first and second and third times the battle may be hard, but the fourth time it will be a little easier. Then the hundredth time it will be quite easy. By and by one gets the habit so thoroughly ingrained into one's nature that nothing can break it or lead one to

yield to depression. It gives wonderful power to life to have won this victory over self.

Then the other rule—never to be a discourager—is also important. Some people are always discouragers. Wherever they go they make life harder for other people. They are always saying dispiriting things, things which terrify or alarm those to whom they speak, things, at least, which make life harder for them. We have no right ever to say to anyone anything that will make him less strong for his battle.

I am very glad to be your friend. I appreciate all that you say about helpfulness which may come to us through friends we have not seen. I believe that friendships formed through one's written words may be quite as strong and as real, in a certain sense, at least, as those which are formed by personal intercourse. I assure you therefore of most kindly interest and of my earnest desire to help you in all your life. May God's best blessing be upon you.

HIS TWENTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY

IN an incidental way I have learned that your twenty-first birthday is about now. I want to congratulate you upon the attaining of this important point in your career. To a young man twenty-one is a charmed number. You

may be no stronger, no wiser, no richer-hearted the day after you were twenty-one than you were the day before, but the line is an important one. You pass into manhood, and look back upon boyhood and youth as something you will not come to again. Let me congratulate you therefore upon attaining this important point.

Let me also wish you the richest and best blessing. Every birthday should be a bright day in a Christian's life. We should stop and look upward, opening heaven's gates by prayer, that the light of God's face may shine down upon us as we rest a moment beside the milestone. It is my earnest prayer that upon your head, on your twenty-first birthday, the light of heaven may indeed shine, giving cheer and new warmth of heart and new inspiration toward "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable . . . whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely."

I have always been deeply interested in your life. You know this from what I have said to you already when I was your pastor. Let me assure you now that, while no longer your pastor, I am no less your friend. I shall always be your friend, and be eager to help you toward the best things. You have capabilities for large usefulness. I hope that you will go on growing in knowledge, in strength of character, in sweet-

ness of disposition, in all manly things, especially in Christlikeness and in the service of Christ.

We never reach the end of anything that is beautiful and good. You must not think that now, when you are twenty-one, you are a man in whom no further improvement can be made. As I said the other day to a young friend, so I say to you, you are just a bundle of bulbs, every bulb full of rich possibilities. It is your part to keep in the sunshine of God's love, under the culture of God's Spirit, so that all these possibilities will burst out into beauty, into sweetness, into power, into fruit.

Our truest and best friend is not he who makes us satisfied with ourselves, who flatters and pampers and pets us and makes us think that we are very great and very good; our best friend is the one who makes us dissatisfied with our present attainments, and who inspires us ever toward better things. I want to help you to reach possibilities in your life which you have not yet reached. I assure you that they are infinite. If you live seventy years, growing every day, you will find yourself, at the close, just beginning to know what life is, just beginning to discover the beauties, the possibilities, and the powers within you. Go on, therefore, growing, working, serving, doing God's will. Let nothing discourage you. Make every difficulty

a stepping-stone to something better. Make every hardness and every trial an opportunity for the development of new strength. A soldier would never become a real soldier without battles. The drill ground is very good in its place, but it is only the struggles on the field which bring out the true soldierly qualities. An easy life, however fine its theories may be, is not a proved life; it is only when one has met difficulties, obstacles, hindrances, and has mastered them, that one is really strong.

Take heed, first of all, to yourself. It is in your own character that the greatest danger lies. You want to be a victorious man in every way over your own faults and feelings, over your own infirmities and weaknesses. You want to learn always to keep sweet, whatever the temptation to bitterness may be—always to keep sweet, and to grow more and more into Christlike grace and gentleness.

It is a glorious thing to be a young man in these days. Just to live, and especially in this country of ours, is a great opportunity. The twentieth century is, no doubt, destined to be a century of marvels in human life in this world. If you are spared, it will be your duty to take an active part in the affairs of this great century. You do not know for what you are preparing yourself. Let me say to you, as one who loves young men, that you cannot be

too earnest in the preparation you are now making, nor too careful; for upon your shoulder will rest vast responsibility, and in your life are hidden the possibilities of splendid achievement. Make all you can of these quiet days. While you strive to gather knowledge the chief aim in your education should be to become thorough master of yourself, so that you may go out, by and by, to exert an influence for good wherever you go.

I am glad that you are a Christian. There is a splendid opportunity, even now, in your college life, for true and manly Christian confession. There will be yet more splendid opportunities in the days to come for Christian life and service. Keep your heart pure, keep your life clean, stay near the heart of Christ. I believe that God has a plan for every life. This means that he has a plan for your life, something he made you for, something he wants you to do in this world. What it is you cannot now tell. Where he will want you to stand in the thick of the fight before you, you cannot know. It is not best that you should know, now. You can best fill your place and fulfill God's purpose for you and carry out the divine thought for your life in the years to come by doing in the passing days, with all your might, the things God gives you to do.

Make the most of your life! God bless you!

QUESTIONS ABOUT MARRIAGE

TO ONE IN DOUBT ABOUT MARRIAGE

OF course, you understand that the question which you are asking so anxiously is one which no one but yourself and your friend can really and finally answer. The matter of marriage is a sacred one, with which no stranger dare intermeddle. Friends may give advice or may give impressions, or may throw light upon the character and disposition of one or the other of the parties, or may even venture to give opinions as to the wisdom or the unwisdom, the fitness or the unfitness of the marriage. But, after all, the two persons who are to live together are the only persons who can finally settle the question. Of course, God should always be taken into counsel, as he should be in all life's transactions. In no other relation in life do we need more the divine guidance. The marriage formula runs, "Those whom God hath joined together," and so forth. The assumption is that the marriage is of God, not only that the ceremony is in his name, a sacred covenant, but that he himself has brought the two together and united their lives.

I always fear, therefore, even to speak a word when asked such questions as you have brought to me, lest some sentence of mine might give

a wrong bias either way. But, very frankly, it seems to me that you are in a morbid condition. Either, as you suggest, you have fallen into the hands of the tempter, and he is making a good deal of trouble for you, or you have formed an unwholesome habit of introspection which is working mischief in you and for you. I cannot see that the question you raise should ever have been raised. I have gone most carefully over your letter, and I cannot see that there is a particle of reason in any of these inquiries which seem to vex you so much. A nobler girl never lived than your friend. It was my privilege to know her while she was here, as a father knows a child. She came to me, not very often, but always with a child's confidence. We talked together, I prayed with her and sought to strengthen her for her work. She has told you all about this, no doubt. What I want to say, however, is that while I have known a great many young women in the Medical College, in other schools and in other walks in life, I say to you very freely, and without the least prejudice, that I believe not one of them is nobler in heart and life than she.

You ask me to make inquiry at the college for her exact standing as a pupil. This I could not do. It would not be a proper thing for me to ask the authorities. I have no very close relations with the dean or secretary of the faculty.

Besides, my asking the question would naturally raise suspicion, at least the thought that some doubt has been cast upon her standing by some one. You will see, I think, readily, that it is not possible for me to grant this request of yours. But, my dear friend, why should you want such figures? Is your love going to be influenced by the difference between eighty-six and ninety-six? I hope not. There is no question whatever that she stood well in her class—I do not know whether she was first or second or tenth. I merely know that she stood high, that she was an honored pupil, not only among the faculty, but also among the students. She bore herself as a Christian in such a way as to win the confidence and the respect, not only of the other Christian girls, but of those who were not Christians.

But I need not go over the points which you enumerate. It seems to me that, as I said before, you are the victim of an unwholesome morbidness which is likely to do you harm in more ways than one. Perhaps this is not altogether strange. I believe that men are very often beset by such feelings in settling questions like this. You are not the first person I have tried to help through similar experiences. But let me advise you to put away all these foolish and unfair questions and to meet the question like a man.

God does not work miracles, to give us signs, as sometimes in the Old Testament days he did, to show us what our duty is. You will not find the fleece dry and the grass wet with dew, nor the fleece wet and the grass dry, as in the case of one of the signs given in the Old Testament. God has put into your mind a proper measure of good sense and wisdom, and he wants you to meet questions of this kind and of all kinds for yourself. There are certain occasions when prayer, it seems to me, is overdone. Sometimes we are to rise and act. Dr. A. J. Gordon said that he had been clearly rebuked by God once when he was praying that the Lord would have compassion upon the lost world. He seemed to hear a voice saying: "I have had compassion upon the lost world. I gave my life for the world. Now it is your turn to have compassion, to give your life for the world." I believe very many prayers made by Christians for the salvation of souls and for the advancement of God's kingdom are little less than mockeries in God's sight, because God wants us to go forth and do the very things which we ask him to do. Now I believe that while prayer is always right, it is quite possible to pray, in a state like yours, until one prays oneself into deep darkness. It looks to me this way. You know her. You have known her for many years. You know that she is one of the noblest God

ever made. You know that the man who can get her for a wife will be honored among men as few men are honored. Now, it seems to me, there is only one question remaining—Can you get her? I do not know how she, herself, feels upon this subject. I have not heard from her since your meeting. But it certainly seems to me that, knowing her so well and believing in her so fully, as you certainly have been led to do by your knowledge and experience of her, you are very foolish to waste time in asking any questions about her fitness to be your wife. I think that part is quite clear. The other question is one perhaps which you need to ask—whether you are a good enough man to be her husband. This she must help you to answer. If you think that she is good enough to be your wife, and she thinks you are good enough to be her husband, I think your lives are ready to blend, and that you may accept these mutual opinions and decisions as indications of God's guidance and approval.

Perhaps I have said more than I should say, for, after all, I have answered your questions almost directly. But you understand that, after all, the question comes back to yourselves. There is some subtle thing in human hearts which, when people are perfectly honest, will, I think, almost invariably tell them whether they should come together or not. If you both

have doubts on the subject, you had better stay apart.

TO ONE ABOUT TO BE MARRIED

IT is good of you to tell me about your happiness. It makes me feel that I have been one of your best friends for a good while. Let me wish you the sweetest blessing in your wedded life. You remember that the first public act of Jesus was to attend a wedding feast. You remember, also, that we are told he was invited to the wedding. If he had not been invited, he would not have been there. He will be at your wedding, too, for I am sure that you will invite him. You remember, also, that Jesus did not cast a gloom over the wedding. Sometimes it is said that ministers cause a sort of restraint upon social and festive occasions by their solemnity. Evidently Jesus did not cast any such shade over the wedding feast at Cana. Instead, he entered into all the gladness and in a time of great embarrassment helped on the joy by working his first miracle. Jesus is not a friend merely for sick rooms and times of sorrow—he is quite as much a friend for our most joyous days. Whatever other guests you may have at your wedding, be sure to have Jesus there. I am sure you will.

I wish I might have a little talk with you before your wedding. I should like to say some things to you about your life. Marriage is always a serious matter, for, however well acquainted two persons may have been as lovers, when they enter the wedded life they have new lessons to learn, and sometimes they make mistakes. I never can forget what a young wife said to me once, about a year and a half after her marriage. She had been sick with typhoid fever, and I was visiting her in her convalescence. One day she pointed to a little card in a frame on her table, and said, "That little card saved my life." I asked her how, and she told me that when she was married both she and her husband were willful and persistent. As a result they had little tiffs from the very beginning, little tests of temper. One day at luncheon they had quite a serious difference about something and neither would yield. The husband rose from the table and went to his business in anger, slamming the door behind him, and the wife went upstairs to her room to cry—a woman's refuge in trouble. Her eye fell upon this little card which a child in her Sunday-school class had sent to her before her marriage. She had never noticed it particularly before, but now the question on the card went right to her heart, like a voice from heaven. The question was, "What would Jesus

do?" She tried to put the question away, but it would not be put away. It demanded an answer. At last she faced it, saying, "What would Jesus do if he were in my place just now?" Her answer was that he certainly would not be so willful and obstinate and show such temper as she had been showing. She fell upon her knees and told the whole matter to Christ. She saw that she had been acting unchristianly, that her Master would have borne her little trials differently altogether.

When her husband came home in the evening she met him at the door with a kiss, as if nothing had happened. After dinner she took him up to her room and showed him the card and told him the whole story. He saw how foolish he had been, too, how unlike Christ. They both fell on their knees and pledged themselves before God that they would show no more fretfulness and impatience and childish resentment, but would keep love in their hearts and be thoughtful, forbearing, forgiving.

"So you see this little card has saved my wedded life. You are not surprised when I say that it is one of the most precious things in the house."

Excuse this long recital, but I want to give it to you as a little suggestion toward the perfect happiness which I know you want to have in your home and life.

WHEN HER ENGAGEMENT WAS BROKEN

I WANT to say a few earnest words to you, my dear child. I want you to be just as brave and strong as you possibly can be. You have endured a great wrong. The young man has treated you in the most unchristian and unmanly way possible. I cannot conceive of anything very much worse in any man's conduct toward a woman. I sympathize with you in my deepest heart, as you know. But I would very much rather be in your place than in his. It is better, far better, to suffer a wrong than to commit a wrong. I am sorry for you, but I pity him a thousand times more. His course has been so cowardly and so unjust and unkind that he certainly is an object of deep and sincere pity. You stand before God innocent of any blame. You have been a true and faithful woman in every way. You have treated him with the most perfect confidence and the truest devotion. You have never wavered for a moment in your faithfulness. You have a clear conscience, therefore, and can look into the faces of your friends without a shadow of shame. But in his case this is not true. He cannot look into God's face and make any explanation which will satisfy. So, as I have

said, I would a thousand times rather be in your place than in his.

What should you do in the matter? Of course you cannot help feeling the disappointment and you cannot help suffering. But I want to help you to rise to a feeling of strength and courage which shall declare your noble womanhood. He has proved himself entirely unworthy of you. Really, while I sympathize with you in your disappointment, I am glad that you did not marry him last Monday. For a man who would treat a girl as he treated you in the month of April would have made a very uncertain kind of husband for her for the rest of the year, and for the years that come after, if he had married her. So you can thank God that the matter was broken off. Of course you feel the embarrassment at home among your neighbors, but every one of them will sympathize with you and will approve of your course. Everyone will say of you that the man was not worthy of you. So, my dear child, rise to the dignity of your finest and best womanhood, and determine that you will not yield to this disappointment, but that you will be brave and strong and independent.

Do not blame God for it. Sometimes people talk about such troubles as if God had sent them. God never sends anything that is sinful. The whole burden of the wrong is upon the man who did it. What part, then, did God have

in it? He did not interfere—he never does interfere with the freedom of our wills. He allowed the man to do the mean and base thing which he did. Now, however, God comes in and sides with you, and will help you to endure this disappointment and this wrong, and to get blessing and good out of it. You remember the story of Joseph's brothers. They sold their younger brother as a slave to get clear of him. It was a terrible wrong. God did not prevent it. But God took into his care the innocent and wronged boy and caused even the terrible injustice and crime against him to work for his good. He was brought by and by to the highest place in Egypt, and became the savior of the country from famine, even the savior of the brothers who had so terribly sinned against him.

Your part of this matter, therefore, is to accept the injury which you have received, and to put the whole matter into God's hands. Do not pity yourself. Do not allow yourself to yield to any weakness. Thank God that the disclosure came before you were married and not after. Ask God to take the whole matter into his hands and to bring out of it blessing and good in his own way. Then go quietly forward in your own duty, with cheerfulness and gladness, trusting everything with God.

The problem of Christian life is not to avoid

troubles, disappointments, sorrows, injuries, but in all these experiences to keep us free from hurt and stain. This trouble cannot do you any harm. It must not make you a less brave and beautiful woman. It must not affect your health. It must not make you a sad-hearted girl. You must come out of it still more cheerful and happy, true and strong as ever, more unselfish and sympathetic than ever before. You must give yourself to Christ now for whatever service he has in mind for you to do. You were planning for a wedded life of happiness and brightness and beauty. If, for the present, this is denied to you, accept whatever comes in its place as better still than that would have been. Be a still more cheerful, happy, and songful woman than ever you have been before.

Am I giving you a hard task? I am giving you just the task that Christ, your Master, would give you if he were talking to you. May God bless you.

LOYALTY TO CHRIST INDEPENDENT OF ENVIRONMENT

WITH regard to the matter of which you wrote so fully, I dare not say much. In affairs of the heart, especially in matters which relate to the expediency or in expediency of marriage, none can really and final-

ly determine what the duty is save the persons concerned. But your letter shows that you are by no means certain yourself concerning duty. It seems to me that the step you have taken has made you very unhappy. Reading between the lines, as well as in the lines which you have written, it seems quite evident to me that you have a very warm affection for your friend. You cannot give him up readily. Indeed, you have not given him up, for you are thinking about reopening the case, or, at least, considering whether you ought not to seek the restoration of the engagement.

I think one of the serious faults of your character is your self-consciousness. You look too much into your own heart. There is too much introspection. You try to weigh motives and feelings and affections too minutely. You need to get away from yourself.

Some of the reasons you suggest for dropping the engagement, it seems to me, amount to nothing. You speak of being afraid to live in X——, because that city is not quite theologically up to your standard. In the first place, you do not know what it would be to you. That city has some advanced ideas, and so have most cities. The people there believe in themselves pretty heartily, and the world laughs at them a little for this. But, after all, they have a good deal to be proud of. It seems to me that

we need never fear the influence of environment on our religious life, if we are firmly settled ourselves as to our duty. Loyalty to Christ is the heart of religion—sincere friendship for him, friendship devoted, unwavering, strong and controlling. Remember, however, that, while the heart of the matter never changes, the expression does change. Loyalty to Christ may not mean quite the same in X—as it means in New York City. I do not mean that when we are in Rome we must do as the Romans do. You remember that even Paul spoke about becoming all things to all men that he might win the more. He did not mean ever to sacrifice principle or to conform to the world in any sense; he only meant that even true devotion to Christ took on a different form in different environments and conditions and circumstances. When a country girl comes into a city she has to put away a good many of her country ways, adapting herself to the social life and customs of the city. This may make her no less a beautiful woman and no less true; it is simply the same woman adapting her life to new conditions. Your religious life in New York City moves in certain grooves. Perhaps in X—it might change its form a little and its mode of expression, remaining meanwhile just as loyal to Christ and truth as it is to-day. Wherever we go we must seek to exert

a wholesome influence for Christ. This we can do, not by conforming to the world; neither can we do it by keeping up our little peculiarities and insisting that these are parts of our Christian life.

I think you understand what I am trying to say—that if you are loyal to Christ and continue loyal to him, you need not fear the new environment in which you would find yourself in X——. Besides this, every woman lives in her own home, and has but a certain measure of her life to live in the world outside. Do not be afraid of this. If you marry a man whom you love with all your heart, you will care very little for the external things. Together, your lives blending in sweet unity, you will work for Christ and pour forth a holy influence which shall make all the air sweeter about you. Then what a blessing you will be to all who know you!

I have not given you any advice—I cannot do this. At least, I cannot advise you whether to seek the restoration of the engagement or not. I only tell you that I am quite sure you are not happy in your present condition with the suspended engagement. I think you will be wise to weigh the matter very carefully. But, if this engagement is restored, you must do so heartily and cheerfully. You must not complain and make the young man feel that you are doing it

with only half a heart. No marriage should ever be entered into in this way. Whatever you do, do heartily, cheerfully, without any feeling of doubt or uncertainty. May God guide you.

TO ANXIOUS MOTHERS

A BUSY MOTHER'S SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS

IT is a joy to me to know that it was an article of mine that led you into serious living. The deepest and purest joy given to anyone in this world is the consciousness that we have been a real help to others in their lives. I hope that I may be still more help to you—a sort of pastor-friend to answer your questions and to try to make some things a little plainer to you. You must not be afraid to bring me any perplexities or difficulties—it will always be a pleasure to try to help you with any of them.

Instead of answering your several questions in detail, perhaps I can reply to them better in a general way. The difference between human friendship and friendship with Christ is the absence of the actual human touch which we have with human friends whom we know personally, and which we can never have with Christ. But really this is not of so much importance as one might think. A little child whom the mother had been trying to soothe when she said she did not want to go to sleep alone with her doll Happy, by telling her she had Happy and that Christ was with her, too, said, “I don’t

want Happy and I don't want Christ—I want somebody with a skin face.” The child realized the difference of which I am speaking. To her the human touch was important. It is important to older people, too. There are times when a human touch means everything to us. It is a comfort to me that one of Christ's ways of helping is through human lives, the human presence, the human touch and voice. I sometimes say to my people that the only body Christ has now in this world is that of his followers. That is, Christ reaches people through you and through me. We are to be his hands to be his touch of comfort. We are to be his heart to give out sympathy and tenderness to all who are in need.

You speak of what I said about feeling. I think I referred to your own expression, your desire to have more feeling in your relations with Christ. What you say is true, that when Christ's presence becomes a reality to us we do have feeling. Faith comes first—believing in the presence of Christ; then comes feeling, joy, the thrill of gladness. Many people at the Communion Table, for example, or in the raptures of their devotions, feel their whole life thrill with the love of Christ. In this case his presence is quite as real as it was to Mary as she sat at his feet, or to John, when he lay upon the Master's bosom.

All you say about feeling, therefore, is perfectly true. I have read your letter through carefully, and I am very sure that your experience with Christ is very deep. He is as actual a friend to you as your husband or as any other friend could be. I thank you for what you have written. It has done me good to read your letter. What you say about the presence of Christ, about friendship with him, about the joy which you experience in the assurance of his love for you, is most comforting indeed.

I should like to say a word about your questions in the closing pages of your letter. Let me say, first, that all our life, if we love Christ and are trying to follow him, is part of our Christian life: all of our work is work for Christ. You give me a sweet picture of your home life—a young mother with two little children at her knee. Your most important duty—even more important than church-going—is your duty of motherhood. God has given you these dear little ones that you may be to them everything that you can be. John B. Tabb writes:

The baby has no skies
But mother's eyes,
Nor any God above
But mother's love.
His angel sees the Father's face,
But he the mother's, full of grace.

You ask whether you ought not to be teaching Sunday school or working in Christian Endeavor, or doing other things for Christ. Never think for a moment that you are not doing Christian work while you are bringing up your children, living a sweet, beautiful life before them, pouring your love into their lives, mothering them, even though you have time for no work outside your home.

An old minister wrote in his ninetieth year something like this—"God came to me first in my mother. He could not have come to me in any other way to bless me, so he put his love and tenderness and purity and grace and sweetness into my mother, and she revealed it to me. After a while I began to know God in other ways, learning to trust him and to lean upon him. Now in my old age my mother has gone, but God remains; and what my mother was to me in my infancy God is to me in my old age." What I want you to see in these words is that the only way God has of getting to your children, of revealing his love for them, is through you. The Jewish rabbis used to say that "God could not be everywhere, so he made mothers."

I need not say another word in answer to your difficulty about not working for Christ. I would not say that you ought not to do anything else but care for children. If you have time, it would be very beautiful for you to do

other things. A young mother I know very well, with two children, one five and one very young, has been for several years one of the most efficient teachers of the little children in the kindergarten of our Sunday school. But she is a mother first, and then because she thought she had the time, and being, besides, a trained kindergartner, she found the opportunity to do the will of Christ for other children as well as her own. But this is a matter which you must settle for yourself. Besides being a mother, you are a wife. You are God's messenger to your husband. I do not mean that you are to preach to him or give him all sorts of advice. As a rule, this is not the best way of doing good to a husband. But you can do a great deal for him by thoughtfulness and kindness. What I want to help you to understand is that you are to be to your husband an interpreter of Christ, of his patience, his holiness, his peace, his helpfulness, his serving.

Then you speak about your outside life. Of course you must have amusements. A life with all work and no play gets very dull. You need every day a little recreation, something to take you away from your serious moods. You speak of watching a baseball game, and not saying a word about Christ, or even thinking about him. That is all right. It is impossible for us always to think of anyone. I do not believe that you

literally think about your husband all the time, or your children. We cannot have two things in our mind at once. But we can be true to Christ and can show his love in our lives in whatever we are doing. That is what I meant by having Christ always in our thoughts, not only when we are praying, but when we are at our work or in recreations and amusements. Then, as for speaking to people about Christ, that has to be done very wisely. Very likely, to have spoken directly of Christ to anyone you saw at the game would have done more harm than good. There is a time for all things. Your duty, it seems to me, is that you should live Christ always. You represent Christ wherever you go. You are one of his interpreters. Even at the game you were preaching Christ by your happiness, your peace of heart, your gentleness, thoughtfulness, kindness. You are always to preach by your example. Now and then, whenever opportunity occurs, you are to speak a word for him.

You say we are required to go out into the world, and to draw all men to Christ. Christ said to himself, "I, if I be lifted up . . . will draw all men unto me." He meant that by his great act of love, in giving his life for the world, he would so reveal the heart of God as to draw all men to himself. He wants us to go out and tell men that he loves them. By our influence in

the world we are to commend Christ. It is said of a devoted Christian minister that everywhere he went he made people fall in love with Jesus Christ. He did it not only by what he said, but even more by the beautiful influence of his life. People saw Christ in him, in the way he lived, in the love he showed to everyone, and they learned to love Christ in him.

A MOTHER'S BURDENS

I ASSURE you of sympathy in the sickness and care which you have had in your home during the winter. I hope that with the spring days you will all be well and strong again; then it will not be so hard for you to live.

I know well that a mother's tasks in the home, caring for her children, are not light. It is no easy thing to go on in the same routine, day after day, week after week, month after month, always keeping sweet, always having a shining face and a cheerful word, always strong to meet every question and perplexity and difficulty that comes to you.

But I want to say a word of encouragement to you. The mother's place is the highest place to which any woman can be called. When God puts into your hand a little child to care for, to guide, to teach, to watch over, to inspire and

train for life, he puts upon you serious responsibility. But he also promises the strength you need and the help for every experience. One of Augustine's great prayers was, "Command what thou wilt, and then give what thou commandest." That is the way God always does, if we trust him and go forward in simple confidence. Whatever he commands us to do, he will help us to do. Nothing is impossible when we have Christ with us and in us. The Emperor of Japan sent to his army recently this word: "Your Emperor and your country expect of you the accomplishment of the impossible." No doubt this little message has been in a large measure the inspiration of the wonderful heroism which the Japanese soldiers have displayed in the war. But Christ sends to us the very same message. He says to us, "Your Master expects of you the accomplishment of the impossible." General Armstrong used to say, "What is a Christian for but to do the impossible?" Anybody can do possible things, easy things. The trouble is that most people are content with doing just such things as these. But the Christian, with Christ back of him, is expected to do things that are impossible to other people.

I want to help you to enter upon your days, whatever their care may be, with the confidence that your Master is with you and is going to

help you to get through everything beautifully, victoriously, sweetly.

I have read of a good woman who had a large family, who also was in plain circumstances and had to do all her own work and care for her children. She had to rise early in the morning to get her husband off to his work and then to get the children ready for school. One morning, rising a few minutes late, she did not have time for her morning prayer. She hastened from her room to the tasks awaiting her. Everything went wrong that morning. She was irritable and impatient. After all had gone away from the house and she was alone, she went up to her room with a heavy heart, discouraged and depressed. Taking up her New Testament to read her morning lesson, she turned to where it says of Jesus, "He touched her hand, and the fever left her." The words arrested her. "If I had had that touch upon my hand this morning before I began my day's tasks, the fever would have left me, and I should have gone through them differently." She never forgot the lesson. Every morning she would get her verse of Scripture and fall upon her knees for a few minutes to get the touch of Christ upon her heart. She was able then to go through all the trying and perplexing tasks and duties of her household without feverishness.

You know what this means. There are other

fevers besides those we have the doctor treat—fevers of impatience, of anxiety, of fretfulness, of discontent, of irritability. The touch of Christ upon our hand always has cooling and refreshing influence. Drummond used to say that ten minutes spent every morning with Christ—yes, even three minutes, if they be spent really with him—change everything for the day. I am not preaching to you—but what you said about your life makes me free to write these things to you. May God bless you and make you very strong and very happy. It is a great thing to be able to live victoriously amid all the cares and frets and frictions and trials of everyday life.

FOR A MOTHER ANXIOUS ABOUT A SON

IT is natural for a mother to be anxious about her son in such a case as you describe. But there are many things that should be carefully considered. College life is different altogether from the quiet sheltered home in which most of our boys are reared. Indeed, very few boys begin to think on religious matters for themselves while they stay in their own homes. They have been brought up from infancy and through childhood and youth to believe certain things, to accept certain doctrines

—not because they have reasoned these questions out for themselves, but because they have been taught them by their parents and in the church which they have attended.

Almost always, however, when boys go away from home and are placed in new conditions, amid new circumstances and influences, the first effect is apt to be a sort of breaking up of the old beliefs. They begin to think for themselves. They hear all kinds of expressions and opinions upon religious subjects. They meet those who profess to be skeptical concerning the great teachings of Christianity. They find others who intellectually hold to the old teachings, but whose lives are not in accordance with their beliefs. The whole atmosphere is changed. A new set of influences begins at once to work upon them. It is not surprising, therefore, that a great many college students have a time, at least, of doubt and uncertainty, passing through various phases of intellectual uncertainty.

But this breaking up of the old conditions, this apparent drifting away from the old moorings, does not at all prove that the young men have gone away in any real sense, morally or spiritually. I have been a great deal among students. I have had two sons to leave home and attend college. I have conversed with hundreds and hundreds of young men and have been in correspondence with many more in this

period of life. I never have a great deal of anxiety, therefore, concerning the changes that take place. Indeed, it is better there should be a change—that is, it is better that a young man should not take his religion merely from his mother or his father or sister, but should examine and find the foundations for himself. No man is ever a strong, earnest or very useful Christian who has not fought over the ground for himself. He may believe fewer things at the end of a period of questioning, but those he does believe he will believe with a great deal more heartiness and reality.

I do not know what the particular experience of Mrs. X's son in this respect was, but I suspect that it was that of nearly all students who attend Princeton or Yale, or any other good college. I would not have one moment's anxiety, therefore, concerning his spiritual state, especially, as you say, he did not drift away into immorality. He was thinking for himself, and I believe almost certainly that he stayed close to Christ. After all, this is the vital thing. If you will read the New Testament very carefully, you will find that our Master called all his disciples to become personally attached to him, to believe on him, to obey him, to follow him, to cling to him, whatever the experience might be. This was the one essential qualification for a disciple. It was not doctrines, not

the observance of ceremonies, not the identification with certain forms of belief—his personal attachment to the Master was all that was required.

You say that young X seemed to lose interest in the activities of religious life. Remember that a college church is different altogether from a home church. There is not the same opportunity for active participation in religious affairs. The men are very busy if they are diligent and faithful, and have little time for meetings and special religious work. Besides, there is but small opportunity for such activity. I am not surprised, therefore, that this young man seemed not to have had the same earnestness that he had when at home. Everything was different. All the influences were against it. Now and then a student does manifest a special religious zeal through all his college course, but there are very few of these indeed in any institution, especially in such universities as Princeton.

I have gone over this ground from the college student's standpoint to help you to understand that the course of young X was not by any means an exceptional one, and did not by any means indicate that he had drifted away from Christ. If he had gone into an evil life, neglecting his duties and wasting his substance and his time and everything he had in evil, then

there would have been a serious reason for anxiety. But if his life were true and pure and faithful, even if he did not maintain the activities of his home life in his college days, I think there is no reason to fear.

Besides, the mother must not lose her confidence in her God. She gave her boy to him in infancy and brought him up for God. Every day, I am sure, she held him up in her hands before God in prayer. God is a covenant-keeping God, and does not forget his promises. While her boy was away from the mother's influence God was taking care of him, keeping him daily in the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the wings of Jehovah. Let her not doubt God's faithfulness in the matter.

Then let her remember also that the mercy of God is infinite. He is very patient with our weaknesses, our infirmities, our faults and failures.

Let her remember also that many a boy at home, who is kept under the influence of the home life and the church life, and seems to be everything that is good—is not so good in his secret life as people imagine him to be. College is not the only place where men drift away from Christ. Many drift away in heart and in secret life even when they seem to be keeping in association with sacred things.

Let the mother put her trust in God, there-

fore, and not be afraid. Christ loved her son far more than she loved him. He died for him, and having died for him he did not let him drift away. Remember the parable of the Good Shepherd who goes after the one wandering sheep until he finds it. Remember the assurance that Christ loves unto the uttermost.

I believe that this precious boy who is so dear to his mother's heart and about whom she is now anxious is with Christ to-day, living and serving nearer the throne, called home early that he might begin a new and a better service in Christ's own very presence. Possibly the reason he was called home may have been because heaven is a safer place for him than this earth could have been amid the temptations and the trials which he was called to meet.

THE HARD THINGS OF LIFE

BURDENS

WHENEVER God puts us in any place he does so intelligently, with some purpose of good for us. There are some lessons he wants us to learn which we can learn in no other place quite so well as where he sets us. Or there are duties to do in that particular place and we are the best person to do them. At least, we should be satisfied that we are never in our place by accident, but that God has placed us where we are for some good reason.

Then when we have special difficulties or hindrances or obstacles or handicaps we have the same comfort, that these are parts of God's plan for helping us. He is always setting us lessons to learn. The lessons are not always easy, either—sometimes they are very hard. But if we accept the divine teaching and take up the duties which he gives to us in our hard place, we shall always find the best blessing and the sweetest comfort.

While we cannot, therefore, change the life conditions or circumstances of our friends, we can sometimes help them to do the work a little more bravely, to live a little more sweetly in the hard conditions, and to make a little more

of their own life where they are. That is all I hope to do for you. Emerson says, "Our best friend is he who makes us do our best." Our best friend is not one who lifts the burdens and makes life easy for us. This is nearly always a mistake. If a child comes home from school with some hard problems or hard lessons and her big sister sits down and does the examples or works out the lessons for her, she may think that she has been very kind, but she has not. She has hurt the child, robbing her of the new wisdom and strength which she would have found in struggling through the lessons herself. So it is with our friends when we do things for them or lift away their burdens for them. We take from them the opportunity of growing stronger and brighter and better.

The way in which I want to help you, therefore, is not by changing your condition, which, I suppose, I cannot do, but by trying to help you to be stronger and braver, gentler and sweeter, more earnest and more determined to do your duty. With regard to yourself—I may sum up all my wish for you in a single sentence—"Always keep sweet." If you always keep love in your heart, patience, gentleness, self-control, forbearance, however hard the condition may be, however unjust your treatment may seem to you to be, you will always be vic-

torious and thus will grow into strength and beauty.

An old promise reads, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." Every burden you have you may cast on the Lord, that is, may lay it on him in prayer and by faith. But notice that God does not promise to lift the burden away—all he promises is to sustain you, that is, to give you strength to do the work, to bear the burden, to meet the difficulty, to master the hindrance or the obstacle.

I am sorry you are to have such a busy time the next few days, but I hope that you will be made strong for it. Keep quiet and restful in your own heart and the work will not be half so hard nor the exhaustion half so great. It is fretting and worrying that gives people nervous prostration and breaks them down—it is hardly ever work that does it. If we would learn to work quietly, with the peace of God in our heart, without any fret, we would never break down.

You ask if it is true that "no Christian ever loses control of himself for an instant."

That is probably true of the Christians who have gone to heaven. I am sure it is not true, however, of the Christians who are still in this world. Of course, the aim of all Christian life is never to lose self-control, even for an instant, but in my rather long experience of life I have

not yet seen the person who had quite attained this perfection. Moses seemed to have come very near to it. For forty years he did not lose his meekness or his patience. But at last even he, in some moment of great stress and strain, spoke unadvisedly, losing his temper and growing angry. Even John, the beloved disciple, once wanted to call down fire upon a village which refused to receive his Master. Please take this, therefore, as the definition of a Christian in the matter to which you refer:

First, every Christian desires to have perfect self-mastery. That is what Christ wants every one of us to attain. This is one of the fruits of the Spirit. See Revised Version, Galatians 5:22, 23.

Second, this matter of self-control is an education. It begins the moment one accepts Christ and starts to follow him. But the process is slow. While we are always to try to control ourselves, turning to Christ for help at every point of temptation, probably we shall all of us find, even at the end of a long life, that we have not yet attained, neither are we yet perfect.

Third, therefore a Christian is one who is striving earnestly and faithfully to keep perfect self-mastery. However often he may fail, he is not to be discouraged, always looking forward, and determining that sometime and

somewhere, although years and years hence, the lesson must be learned and the victory won.

“He came to my desk with a quivering lip;

The lesson was done.

‘Dear teacher, I want a new leaf,’ he said,

‘I have spoiled this one.’

In place of the leaf so stained and blotted,

I gave him a new one all unspotted,

And into his sad eyes smiled,

‘Do better now, my child.’

“I went to the Throne with a quivering heart;

The old year was done.

‘Dear Father, hast thou a new leaf for me?

I have spoiled this one.’

He took the old leaf, stained and blotted,

And gave me a new one, all unspotted,

And into my sad heart smiled,

‘Do better now, my child.’”

MASTERING THE BLUES

DO you know that life is all a bundle of habits? We form habits of doing this or that, and after a while the habit becomes fixed. I read of a stage driver who had been holding his lines so long that his hands were bent like hooks and could not be straightened out. If you hold your eyes in a certain position—looking always the same way—day after day, year after year, it will not be very

long before you will look always in that way, and cannot really look any other way. The same is true of your thoughts. If you allow your thoughts to run along certain lines, dark lines, a month, a year, two years, by that time you will have worn a track like that which a wheel makes in the road, and you cannot get your thoughts to go in any other way.

You have been allowing your mind to run for a good while along sad lines, lines of depression and discouragement. You have been thinking you were sick, or had this trouble or that trouble. So long have your thoughts been running along these channels that now they have washed a track for themselves, and it is almost impossible for you to get them out of that track.

Now I want you to be brave enough to undertake a pretty serious piece of work. You have got to change the direction of your thoughts, your feelings, your moods, your words. If they are allowed to run as you have been letting them run for a good while you will always be a gloomy sort of person, without any enthusiasm, with poor health, or at least health which you imagine to be poor. For our imagination, just like our thoughts, forms grooves and runs in them. What I want you to do is to begin the minute you read this letter to tear your thoughts away from these dark lines, these gloomy tangles, these hopeless things, and get

them to going in the bright ways, happy ways, into rippling song and cheery laughter. It is not hard to do this for one minute when somebody is talking to you. You know very well, too, at that time that the thing you are doing that moment is just what you ought to do all the time. What I want you to undertake to do is to say that you will positively and persistently and unalterably turn away from everything dark and gloomy and cheerless for, we will say, a few months, to begin with. That is, till the first of October next you are going to turn yourself into new channels altogether. You are going to turn your eyes toward the hills, the blue skies, and refuse ever to let them drop again to the ground. You are going to keep your thoughts up—not thinking once about yourself, not allowing yourself to brood for one minute about something you had, or think you had, yesterday, or last month. You are going to resolve that you will not allow yourself to speak a single discouraging or cheerless or pessimistic word, but are going to talk only brightly, cheerfully, bravely, happily. I put on the corner of your little note last evening the lines:

“Look up and not down,
Look out and not in;
Forward and not back,
And lend a hand.”

I want to give you a bit of experience of my own. When I was a young fellow I was in the habit of being moody and easily discouraged and depressed. I was always imagining I was sick. I thought I had consumption or liver trouble or lung trouble, or some other one of a thousand diseases. At least I was always acting like a baby in those matters.

One day I woke up, got wide awake, and saw that I was simply making a fool of myself. I saw perfectly well in the vision of good sense which came to me that day that if I went on as I had been doing I never would be of any use in the world, would make nothing of my life, would be a most unpleasant fellow among other people.

Then and there I settled it that this thing must not go on a single day longer. I resolved that I would undertake to master myself and turn all the tides of my life in other directions, wholesome directions. I resolved that I would never get discouraged, no matter what might happen, that I would not allow myself to say a disheartening word or let a single discouraging thought into my mind. I resolved that I would put away all gloomy imaginings concerning diseases in myself. In a word, I would look up, not down, out, not in, forward, and not back, and begin to lend a hand to everybody anywhere about me.

I had a long and very hard fight. Every little while I would feel myself drifting back again into the old miserable way of thinking about myself, of imagining I was sick, and getting blue and depressed. But I would wake up again and shake off the feelings, determined never to be conquered. The result was, to put it as briefly as possible, that in two or three years I had so completely mastered myself that I never for a moment allowed anything to discourage me or to make me feel blue or disheartened. When I did not succeed in doing what I wanted to do I tried again. If I really did not feel very well I fasted a little, and got my stomach in better condition, and that cured the unpleasant thing. For a good many years now I think I have mastered the habit so well that I am optimistic in everything about myself and everybody else. I think I have learned to live along the lines of the best possible help. Of course things get tangled sometimes in my work and affairs, but I do not allow myself to fret over it, knowing that all will come right if I do my part. People come to me with their burdens and perplexities and their sorrows. Sometimes it is a terrible mix-up which they bring to me, but I never let myself get frightened at any number of perplexities or trials. My mission is to get these people right again.

I have told you this about myself. I never have written this out for anybody before. But it is a real chapter in my life, which you see, I think, meant a good deal to me. You have just the same chance that I had. You can let your life drift along in the old lines, if you desire to do so, but you know what the end will be. Or, a thousand times better, you can do as I did, you can turn your eyes away and lift up your heart and your voice and shut the doors forever on discouragement of every kind, put away all thought of ill health or anything else of the kind, and go forward to splendid health, to fine manhood, to achievement worth while.

HELPED BY HINDRANCES

IT is not easy in some ways for you to meet life. It looms up before you like a mountain, and it seems to you that you never can climb to its summit. But you need have no fear of life, however it may seem to pile up its difficulties before your face. All you have to do is to put your hand in the hand of Christ, and to let him lead you step by step. I believe that God has a plan for every life; that he knows what he wants each one of his children to do for him in his world. George

Macdonald speaks of this somewhere, and says:

To have been thought about by God, born in God's thought, and then made by God, is the dearest, grandest and most precious thought in all thinking.

It certainly is a thought of comfort and uplifting to know that you were thought about before you were born, and that God sent you into this world to do some particular thing, to fill some particular place. This is not fatalism. While God has this plan and purpose for your life, you have to fulfill it and carry it out yourself. That is to say, there is something that he wants you to do, something that he wants you to attain in character and life and influence. But the reaching of this ideal is something which you yourself will have to work out in detail.

Then let me say also to you that the things that may seem to be hindrances to you, perhaps insuperable hindrances, are the very means by which you are to reach the divine thought for you. We know best when we are under pressure, when we are carrying burdens, when we have responsibilities, and when tasks and duties fill our hands. All you have to do is to accept your place as one of God's children, to know that he is planning for you, thinking about you, and then to put yourself

in perfect accord with God in striving to become what he wants you to become, and to do what he wants you to do.

You speak of the loss of money. Perhaps some day you will thank God even for this loss. I have had many experiences with young people in such cases. A young woman came to me to tell me that she was even grateful for the loss of fortune which occurred some fifteen years ago. She said to me that if their money had not been taken away from them she would have been simply a spoiled child, petted and pampered, with no strength of her own, and no place amid the world's activities. But the taking away of the money made it necessary for her to take up life's burdens for herself. She became first a stenographer, and then an assistant secretary in a leading institution for young people, and for several years past has been registrar in the institution. Thus she has risen to noble womanhood and a position of great influence, with countless opportunities for helping other young people in their lives. What she thanked God for was the blessing which had come in her own case from the loss of money. Instead of money she has now training and strength, and noble womanhood, and the opportunity for large service.

I give you this merely as a word of encouragement.

IN GREEN PASTURES

I AM glad that you are so comfortable and so hopeful, that you have the assurance of your physicians that you will get well and strong again. This certainly is very encouraging. While you trust the physicians and follow their prescriptions you want to make earnest prayer each day that God will use the physicians and bless their medicines and means, for, after all, there is only one Healer. Your life is in God's hands and, whatever skill physicians may have, the blessing of God is necessary to make it effective. I am going to pray for you a great deal, that God will use all the skill of your doctors and put his power into the means that are employed, that you may get strong and well again and have a long life of service. It will add very much also to all that can be done if you will keep your heart at perfect peace, without any anxiety or fear, trusting God and not being afraid.

I would like to help you into the sweetest possible trust. You speak of your religious life as not having given you quite the comfort that you would like to have from it. Let me say to you, my child, that religion is simply friendship with Jesus Christ. He is your Friend, he loves you, he gave himself for you,

he lives and is with you all the while. This is the first thing for you to remember. You cannot see him, but no human friend can come so close to you as Christ is all the time. No human friend loves you, no mother, no husband, so tenderly, so warmly, as Christ does. Then the best human friends are sometimes out of your reach. You cannot have their companionship always. But Christ is never out of your reach, never away from your side, but always is with you, closer than the air you breathe.

Your part is to believe this and to accept the love and friendship of Christ. You know what it is to let a friend into your heart, to believe in him, to trust him, to become more and more confiding and trustful as the days go on and as your experience deepens. I want to help you to realize the friendship of Christ in just the same way. There is a verse which says, "Whom not having seen ye love." If you believe that Christ loves you with an infinite, everlasting love, and that he is always with you, and then simply abandon yourself to that love, let him into your heart, open every door of your being to him, learn to trust him as a little child trusts the mother when lying in her bosom, you will find that Christ will become more and more real to you.

It is not church-going and Bible-reading and

doing certain religious acts that make up a life of faith. After all, as I have said, it is nothing but close personal friendship with Christ.

It is my earnest prayer to God that you will realize this more and more. You ask why God has laid his hand upon you in this way, and you suggest that probably he has some lesson to teach you. God always has lessons to teach us in every experience of our life. I cannot tell what the lesson is in your case. But I am sure of this, that you can make this time of waiting a time for learning trust in God, for learning patience, and for the bringing of your soul into sweet accord with God's will. There is a phrase in the Twenty-third Psalm which I like to quote—"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." Sometimes we do not care to lie down, to rest, but would rather go on in our own way. But God knows that we need the rest and so he makes us lie down. But notice that it is in "green pastures." That is, wherever God calls us to rest there is blessing about us, and we need not be afraid.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT OF PAIN

I KNOW well that it is hard not to get discouraged when your sufferings continue so long, and when it looks as if you will have to carry the burden a good while longer.

But my deep interest in you which draws me very close to you makes me want to help you a little if I can. I should like to put into your heart good cheer and encouragement. This I am sure the Master himself would seek to give you if he were writing to you to-day as I am.

I like those words of Christ's, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." It is a great comfort to you to know that nothing is hidden from him, that he understands all about your condition and circumstances and knows how hard it is for you to bear all that you are now called upon to bear. But the fact that he knows helps to make you strong. You say, "Yes, he knows, but he does not change things, does not relieve me of my sufferings." Well, my child, this is precisely where your faith comes in. You know that he could change all this if he knew it were best for you. The fact that he does not relieve you of your suffering shows that there is some mission which he wants that suffering to work in you, some lesson he would have you learn while enduring it, some new power of usefulness and service which he would have you attain through these long experiences of trial. Have you read "The Sky Pilot"? If you have, do you remember the beautiful story of Gwen's Cañon? This is one of the finest bits of writing on Christian faith that I have read for a long time. Gwen

could not understand why God loved her and yet allowed her to suffer so. Yet she understood well why her father did not interfere with the doctors when they hurt her so in their treatment. She said her father let the doctors do it because they hoped to make her better again. There was the whole reason for her.

The reason is not the same for you, for you love Christ and are trusting sweetly in his love. Yet there is a phase in this story which seems to come in beautifully for you too. You remember that Jesus told Pilate when he boasted that he had power to crucify him or release him, that he could have no power at all unless it were given him from above. That is to say, it was God who gave Pilate power to cause Jesus such humiliation and suffering. The Father could have easily taken away that power, but, that his Son should do his work of love in the world, Pilate received the power to send him to the cross. The thought is that nothing hurtful can come into our lives if we are God's children, without the Father's permission. He never gives such permission without some good reason. He never allows us to suffer through anger or vindictiveness on his part. There is always a mission which the suffering has to fulfill.

This is a very round-about way to say that

some day you will understand all this experience of yours as part of God's wonderful love for you. I must not attempt to give God's reasons. Yet I can suggest some things that possibly he may mean for you in this long trial. One is that he has something very beautiful and very sacred for you for the future—some sweet service you are to render, some beautiful thing you are to do, and he permits you to suffer that you may be trained for this work or mission. You remember that even Jesus reached his highest place through pain. He suffered that he might be able to do more for us as a Saviour.

Another possible reason is that God wants to make you a blessing right now in your own church and to those about you who see you and watch your life. Nothing means more to the world than the patient endurance of trial by God's children. If you were to complain and find fault and fret in your suffering you would fail to be the beautiful witness for Christ that you wish to be. But the very fact that you endure it all so sweetly, so patiently, so cheerfully, even so songfully, makes your life a blessed influence to all the people of your church and to your friends who come to see you from time to time.

Then there is something else which means a good deal. I am sure that those who suffer

patiently and quietly, acquiescing in God's will, are being prepared for the highest place in heaven and for the most beautiful and noble service there. You remember that little picture in Revelation of the company which John saw, wearing white robes and bearing palm branches in their hands. They seem to be a specially happy company. One would think that they had been earth's happy ones, and that they had not known suffering and trial. But when John asked who they were the angel said, "These are they that come out of the great tribulation." That is, they are the earth's suffering ones. Because of their suffering and trial in this world they occupy the highest places in the heavenly kingdom, wearing white robes, waving palm branches, and telling of their victory over pain and suffering.

I have written you this long letter to say that there is a secret of undiscourageableness which may be yours and which is yours. I know it is hard to suffer day after day, but your Father knows and still permits it to continue, because he would make you a sweeter woman, a more noble witness for him, because he would prepare you for larger service and helpfulness, and because he is fitting you for the higher life that lies beyond. Do not be afraid. Keep

on singing your songs of joy whatever your experience of pain may be.

BLESSINGS IN HARD THINGS

IT seems to me that there is no reason why you should look back over your relations with your husband with any regret. You say that your love was almost idolatrous. You speak of your adoration being so satisfying that you even absented yourself from church services that you might be together. Of course, that was not a wise thing to do. I think it is well for us, whatever our other interests may be, always to keep God in the first place, and never neglect our duty to him. Of course, I understand that two persons together may honor God in their conversation and occupation, perhaps quite as much as if they were to sit side by side in the church. I do not know how you spent your time together on Sundays. But, whatever the facts may have been, let me say to you that it is unwise now for you to waste a moment or a particle of strength in regret. The true way to deal with our life's mistakes is to confess them to God and then to gather wisdom from them by which we may become more earnest and faithful in days to

come, avoiding the repetition of these mistakes and pouring all the strength of our penitence in a new fervor and gladness of living. Nothing you can do will change anything you have done. It is unwise, therefore, to waste a moment in weeping over it. If your conscience tells you that it is not what you should have done, God is very gracious, and, if you ask him, he will sweetly and graciously forgive you.

With regard to the present, there is only one duty, and that, it seems to me, is very plain, as plain as the path before your feet at noon-day. It is to return at once, with all earnestness and fervor to Christ, to reconsecrate your life to him, and to enter immediately upon the duties which he may give to you. I should certainly go to the Communion Table next Sunday. God forgives all that is past if you ask him, and then for the future he will give you strength and wisdom and grace, that you may live more sweetly.

Life is meant to be cumulative. Each day should be better than the day before. We should get lessons from the experiences of every hour, and carry these lessons forward, getting them into our life. You have been a learner all these years, and, therefore, everything that has happened has been a part of your education and has left its impress upon

your life. Simply dedicate yourself again to Christ and let him be your Comforter and your Friend.

Let me say another word also about your sorrow. You have given me your confidence, and I want to be as a pastor to you, a true and faithful and loving pastor, entering into your life with the most complete sympathy. Sorrow is always full of danger. Some people resist and refuse to submit to it. The result is that their lives are hurt by it. They come out of it with a little less sweetness and sensitiveness of spirit, perhaps embittered toward God, possibly less sweet toward people about them. The true way to meet sorrow is with sweet acquiescence in God's will, not resisting, but yielding to him. This does not mean that we shall not feel our griefs—we cannot help this; God never blames us for our pain of heart and even for our very deep sorrow. But, however poignant the affliction may be, God wants us to keep close to him in tender love, without fear, without complaining, without bitterness. Then the sorrow does us good. Our life is enriched by it.

I see in your correspondence no evidence that your grief has hurt you. Indeed, I think it has helped you. So far as you have written to me, you have not said a single word which showed anything but acquiescence and sweet

submission to God's will. But I want to help you still more in the same direction. Accept sorrow and know that God has made no mistake. We do not know what our Father's plan for us is. I am sure of this, that every sorrow which comes to us brings to us within its dark folds a blessing, a gift of God, a new revealing of God's love. The loss which you have mourned so deeply no doubt has in it some gain, some blessing. Often the things which we prize the most highly, without which we think we cannot live, God knows would, in the end, not be the best for us. It is not well even to ask questions—it is better just to say, "My Father knows best, and I will submit my life to him: I will leave all in his keeping and abide by his ordering."

..

What I have said about your trial applies to all trials, to all hard experiences in life, to all sorrows. We are never told that we shall have an easy time in this world. Christ did not pray for his disciples that they should be taken out of the world; that is, away from the world's persecutions and enmities and oppositions, but that, staying in the world, they might be kept from the evil. Life's problem is not to escape severe things, even cruel things, but, whatever the experiences may be, to keep our own heart gentle and sweet all the while.

SONGFUL ACCEPTANCE OF GOD'S WILL

I AM glad to write you, for it seems to do you good. It has been a great pleasure to me to come into your life and add a little strength. Perhaps I have already quoted to you Miss Dickinson's lines in which she says that if we can help one fainting, into his nest again, we shall not live in vain. I suppose the suggestion came from the story of Mr. Lincoln, who, finding one day in the grass beside a hedgerow a callow bird, picked it up gently and walked along the hedge until he found the nest out of which the bird had fallen and then restored it—put it back into the nest again. It was a beautiful thing for the great man to do. Even to help back into its place a bird which had fallen out is enough to redeem a day from waste and make it beautiful. I am sure it is very much worth while to help a discouraged soul, a life tossed out of its nest of quiet and peace, back into its place again. What I want to do for you, my child, is to help you back into the sweet rest, the quiet peace, the holy confidence which are the privileges of every true Christian. You have been disturbed by your sorrow—it has tossed you out of the best for the time. Life seemed to be broken up for you very much. But you cannot get

back the experience out of which you have thus been taken. Whatever is inevitable in our life must be the will of God for us. Since you cannot hope to have restored to you that which death has taken out of your hand, you must believe that it is the will of God for you that you should go on without these joys.

Another thing is also very sure—it is not necessary that this sorrow should really hurt your life. God allows no experiences to come to us in which we cannot live victoriously and sweetly as Christians. I am sure, therefore, that he is able to give you grace to live without your friend, to glorify him, to serve him. It becomes the will of God for you, therefore, to adapt yourself to the new experience. You had planned to live with your friend. God's plan leaves the friend out of the earthly experience. Take God's plan, but do not feel that your real joy is to be hurt thereby. That is to say, God is able to make up to you the loss, and help you to live richly and beautifully as you are. Accept, therefore, the will of God and devote yourself to it, not perfunctorily, not as by mere constraint, but cheerfully, songfully, believing that God's way is the best, although you cannot see that it is.

If you read the eighth chapter of Romans, from the twenty-eighth verse to the end, you will find some very sweet and precious truths

which will be like rocks for you to lean upon, like clefts in which you may hide from the storm.

IN THE HANDS OF GOD

I. TO AN ANXIOUS FATHER

I HAVE thought about your daughter a great deal since you told me about her illness some weeks since. She has been often in my prayers that God would bless her, comfort and strengthen her, and if his will be so, to spare her life longer. You do not say anything about her condition, but I infer from what you write that she is quite feeble. I shall write a little note to her to-day.

Let me thank you, however, for your very cordial words, and assure you of loving sympathy in your time of anxiety. God has led you and your family through valleys of shadow. But I know that he has never once failed to lighten the valleys for you by his own loving presence. Those words in the Twenty-third Psalm, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me," are applicable not only to the experience of dying, but quite as much to experience of sorrow in life. It has always

been a comfort to me to think of that valley as it lay in the mind of the oriental shepherd. You know the reason he often led his sheep through these gloomy defiles. It was not because he wished to make the way hard for them or to give them anxiety and dread. The reason was that somewhere on the other side he knew of a bit of green pasture to which he wished to lead his flock, in which they might lie down and on which they might feed. The only way, or at least the best way, to get to the pasture was to pass through this dark gorge.

The meaning of this in our lives is very beautiful. God does not take us through glooms and shadows to terrify us or to make the burden of the way heavier for us. There are sweet blessings to which he would lead us, but they lie over on the other side and cannot be reached safely but by going through these dark passages. Every time, therefore, the Lord leads us into any dark valley we may be sure that he is taking us to something very sweet and beautiful on the other side. It has been so in your case. When you have passed through these shadowed ways you have always come to new blessings, new joys, new comforts, which have compensated in a measure for the gloom and the shadow.

May God comfort you in this time of your anxiety.

II. TO THE SICK DAUGHTER

I have had you in my thoughts many times since I learned of your illness. It has been very sweet to speak your name to God in prayer again and again, asking him to bless you, comfort you, strengthen you, to make the way bright and beautiful for you. I am sure that this prayer has been answered. You have been sick through the winter, but you have had Christ very close beside you.

There is a very sweet verse in one of the psalms which says: "Into thine hand I commend my spirit." Our Lord used these words when he was about to die on the cross—"Into thy hands I commend my spirit." They are good words, therefore, to use when one is about to leave this world. That is all death is to a Christian—merely breathing the spirit out from the body into the hands of the heavenly Father. There certainly can be nothing to dread in such an experience, and this committal is a very beautiful one indeed. But David, in writing these words, did not think of death, but of life. He commended his life into the hands of God. He could not see what lay before him. He knew not what the experiences of the coming days would be. But he knew that God understood it all and would care for

him. So he committed everything to him. This is what you have been doing with your life all these years. This is what you do every morning when you wake—commit yourself into God's hands for the little day, with all its experiences, knowing that God will keep you and bless you.

It is very sweet to think of the hands of God. How gentle they are! The gentlest hands sometimes give pain, but the hands of Christ are always infinitely gentle. I remember reading of an Indian child who came in one day from the field with a hurt bird. Showing it to her grandfather, she said: "See! I have a bird. It is mine." The old man asked her where she got the bird and she told him that she had found it in the wheat field. Its wing had been hurt, and it could not fly. He bade her carry the bird back to the place where she had found it and lay it down on the ground. "It is not your bird," he said. "It is God's bird. If you keep it it will die, but if you take it back and leave it in God's hands it will live. God knows best how to heal a bird's hurt wing." I have always thought of this as a beautiful illustration, showing the difference between human hands and God's hands. Our friends love us and they do all they possibly can for us. But in all the world there are no hands, not even a mother's, that are so gentle

as God's, or in which our lives are so safe. It is very sweet, therefore, to trust ourselves, with all our pain and weakness and suffering, in the gentle hands of Christ.

These hands are not only gentle, but also strong. They are able to do for you everything you need to have done. These are the hands that have made all things in the universe and which uphold all things. Surely they are strong enough, therefore, to hold you up and to keep you ever in safety.

But I must not write more to you—you are not strong enough, I fear, to read or to hear a long letter. Let me, therefore, assure you of loving interest and of much prayer these days that God may sweetly bless you.

HIS GRACE IS SUFFICIENT

THE best help I can give you is to try to remove the wrong impression which you evidently have about the cause of your sufferings. Never for one moment must you feel that they have come upon you, as you suggest in your letter, because of any lack in your own life. You remember that sweet promise which says, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." You remember also that in the parable of the Vine and the Branches our Lord

says that the branches which bear fruit are the ones which he purges and prunes that they may bring forth more fruit. If we interpret our sufferings and trials by this divine teaching, as we must do, our conclusion will be that the branches which have no pruning, which endure no cutting, are the ones which should raise the question whether they are indeed pleasing God. In the same parable, Jesus said, "My Father is the husbandman." This is to me a wonderfully sweet truth—that in all life's disciplines, however severe they may be, it is our Father who is pruning. We are always safe when we are in his hands.

It is unwise to try to find out why God sends afflictions upon us or allows affliction to come upon us. In the first place, we must remember that there are physical causes which God ordinarily works no miracles to prevent or set aside. There is a physical heredity which goes on. Our physical sufferings or diseases or weaknesses, or whatever they may be, may have come down to us, perhaps not from our immediate progenitors, but possibly farther back. Even this, however, must not be looked upon as in any sense a visiting of sin upon those who are afflicted. I wish to say that God does not ordinarily interfere with natural processes in the development of our lives. It is scarcely right, therefore, for us to say that

God sends to us every suffering, every disease, every trouble which comes into our life. Indeed, it is better not to raise the question at all of whence or why or how, but when we find ourselves in any experience of trial, to put our life with its burden into the hands of God and let him care for us and do for us that which is best.

For yourself, let me simply say this, that even your sufferings may become a great blessing to you. Indeed, I am sure they have become a blessing to you already in more ways than you can possibly understand. Take your reference Bible and find Psalms 55:22. You will see that in the margin the word "gift" is suggested as a substitute for the word "burden." Instead of reading "Cast thy burden upon the Lord," it may mean "Cast thy gift upon the Lord." That is, your burden is God's gift. No matter how it came, as it is now in your life it is a gift of God to you. The sufferings may be accepted by you as a part of God's will. Being a gift of God it is, therefore, something good. I do not mean that the disease in your limb is good, but that your suffering infolds, wraps up, incloses, something good, a gift, a blessing from God. This blessing may be patience, or some other sweet lesson which God wants you to learn. But suppose you would read II Corinthians 12:1-10. In these verses

Paul tells of a wonderful experience which he had. He had some great suffering which he called "a thorn in the flesh." He does not say what it was, but evidently it was some physical pain, some think epilepsy, some think a trouble with the eyes, some think a nervous affection. No matter what it was, it was very painful and seemed to interfere with the apostle's usefulness. Three times, therefore, he besought the Lord that this thorn in the flesh might be taken away. But the answer was, "No; keep it. My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Then Paul learned this wonderful secret, that the physical suffering which was so hard to bear, if accepted by him, brought him a corresponding measure of the strength of Christ. As you read on you find the apostle saying that he rejoiced now in his infirmity, because the power of Christ thus rested upon him. That is, the suffering, keen and terrible as it was, brought Christ nearer to him, brought more of Christ's strength into his life, and thus fitted him for larger spiritual usefulness. You can apply this to yourself. You have asked God to remove your thorn in the flesh and he has not done it. But let me assure you that the words which the Lord spoke to Paul he speaks to you also. His grace is sufficient for you. His strength is made perfect in weakness. That is, you will

get more of Christ's help in your life because of the suffering which you are enduring than if the suffering were to be taken away, you receiving then less of Christ's help because needing less.

It seems to me the secret of a happy life lies in two or three very simple things—perhaps in two. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." This leaves us but one thing to do—our duty, the bit of God's will that comes to us each day. Then, for the other things, we are to trust, simply to trust, not only for bread and raiment, but for everything. You have learned this lesson, and, as you say, the peace of God fills your heart.

You must not think that you are not doing any good while unable to take your place among the active forces of the world. I think very often those who think they are doing the least may really be doing the most. It is a great thing to let one's life witness to the power of God's grace in just such quietness and confidence as you have in your heart. All those who come near to you receive a benediction from your life. In place of complaining and murmuring, and showing discontent, as many people do even in time of health and with all physical environment of the happiest kind, you show in your quiet confidence and sweet

trust that you are God's child, and that God is supporting you, that you have meat to eat that the world knows not of, that you have sources of blessing which men cannot see. This alone is a beautiful thing. Then your prayers, rising to God day by day, are a power in the world. We underestimate altogether the influence of prayer. We think we can do good by working, by talking, by going restlessly everywhere. We forget that we can do yet more good often by keeping still and lifting up our hearts to God in prayer. I think that one reason why God calls some people apart, out of the busy field, into a quiet place, is that he wants them to be intercessors, helping by prayer, exercising the ministry of intercession.

I think you get the lesson. Don't be afraid. Rest quietly and confidently in the hands of Christ. Leave everything with him. If you are still to bear this trouble, bear it quietly, patiently, submissively, trusting Christ.

COMFORT FOR THE BEREAVED

WHAT IS THE REASON FOR SORROW?

REFERRING to the question which you start in your letter, the reason for sorrow, let me say to you first that I am not averse to raising such questions. I do not say it is wrong or unwise for us to do so. Indeed, we cannot help asking questions if we have any brains at all. A person who has no questions does not do much thinking. My thought is, however, that there are a great many questions which are unanswerable, and that the best way for us to treat such questions is to leave them for further light and intelligence. I preached last Sunday on the words of Peter in Luke 5: 5, "At thy word I will." I tried to show that the one simple duty of Christians is to obey Christ's biddings, whatever they may be. I spoke specially of the fact that the reason for many of these biddings cannot be understood by us at the time, but that whether we understand them or not, even if the whole matter is full of mystery, our duty is the same—always to obey the Master's call. "At thy word I will." Peter could not see any use in casting the net again after they had been fishing all night without avail. Still this did not affect his obedience, either in fact or in

spirit. I referred in the sermon to many experiences in life in which we are called to enter a mystery of trial or sorrow, where it seems to us the end can only be disaster, but that in all such cases our duty is the same—"At thy word I will."

Let me say further, referring to the question more directly, that it is one I suppose never can be answered. I read last night a sermon by Rev. R. J. Campbell, of London, on the subject of God's omniscience and omnipotence and of human free agency and responsibility. Mr. Campbell takes the ground that the hard and severe things which come to people's lives have their mission, a mission which we cannot always interpret, but which our faith in God makes us sure that he understands. Nothing is without purpose.

"The very law that molds a tear
And bids it trickle from its source,
That law preserves the earth its sphere
And guides the planets in their course."

Even where we do things to others which are wrong, the very wrong has its blessing for those to whom it is done, although this does not free us from the guilt of the wrongdoing. Joseph's brothers, for example, committed a terrible crime against him when they sold him into Egypt, but God used that very crime to

forward his own great purposes, not only for Joseph's promotion, but for the good of the people of Israel and of the world. Those who put Christ to death committed the crime of crimes, and yet their very crime brought about the redemption of the world.

I suppose something of the same reason applies to all the matters to which you refer, the things which seem to be cruel and terrible in nature. We may say that God does not interfere with natural law in ordinary cases, and this is true. As a rule, he does not save people from physical suffering in disease. He does not stop fire and flood in their devastations.

All we can say, I suppose, in the matter is that whatever may happen, we know that God is love. He is redeeming the world, lifting it up from its degradation into beauty and heavenliness. For example, the war which is now beginning may work great blessing to the whole East. It would seem that nothing but war will ever change the policy of Russia or open up its vast country to let the gentle and sweetening influences of Christianity into its life and its homes. Chicago was swept by a terrible fire more than thirty years ago, but Chicagoans now tell us that the fire was the greatest blessing that ever came to their city, for out of the ruins of the town there rose a new city, a thousand times more beautiful than the one which

was destroyed. The same is true of the Boston and Portland fires. The same will be true, no doubt, of the Baltimore fire. Evidently, therefore, there is a law running through all the providence of God by which good is brought out of evil and blessing out of suffering and new life out of sorrow.

GOD'S COMFORT IN SORROW

I CANNOT tell you how glad I am that my letter to you had its help and comfort in the time of your sorrow. My heart went out to you in very deep and sincere sympathy. It was my earnest prayer that God might comfort and strengthen you. I am glad to know that he has done so. Yet even the comfort of God does not take away the pain of sorrow nor the pang of loss. Sometimes people think that they have not been comforted because they still feel as keenly as ever the bereavement which took so much out of their life. It is not possible to comfort in this way. Sorrow is part of our life. God does not give back to us the loved ones for whom we mourn. Nor does he make our hearts less tender and sensitive. Indeed, the Christian is made even more tender-hearted by the love of Christ and feels more keenly than the world's people feel the pain

of sorrow. The comfort which God gives, however, comes in the way of great and blessed truths which give a new aspect to our sorrows. There is the truth of immortality—that our loved ones who have gone from us have gone into a larger life, a sweeter, truer, happier, more blessed life. Nothing is lost in death—nothing but the things which cumber our hearts. Love is not lost, memory is not lost, the beautiful things of character are not lost; these all stay in the heart and life of the loved one who passes out of our presence into the presence of God.

Another of God's comforts is in the assurance of his own love. I suppose that one reason sorrow comes to us, taking out of our life the things which are so dear to us, is, that we may love God more and see more beauty and grace in him. Still another comfort of God comes through the assurance that even sorrow brings blessings. Some day you will know what rich gifts came to you in the days of your deep grief. God sends many of his sweetest blessings to us in the time of our sorrow. He wraps up in its dark and forbidding form the gentle things which make our lives richer, which make us stronger, braver, truer, and more Christ-like.

One of the great blessings of sorrow is the preparation for ministering to others. One

of the most remarkable words about sorrow is in one of Paul's Epistles, where he says that God comforts us that we may comfort others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves have been comforted. Like all other things, comfort is not given to us for ourselves alone, but given that we may pass it on to others in their sorrow. You have received God's comfort; now you are ordained of God to go into the world to be a comforter of others. Looking back upon your girlhood days, you see how many lessons you have learned, not only in college, with your books and teachers, but in your life of love as a wife and as a mother. Now God has set other lessons for you—lessons of pain and suffering. But they are still lessons meant to make you a stronger, truer, larger-hearted woman, and to fit you for serving others. You are now set apart to a ministry of comfort to other mothers. I wonder if you have read the following lines? They seem to me so full of truth that I want to quote them to you.

“Because of one small, low-laid head all crowned
With golden hair,
Forevermore all fair young brows to me
A halo wear;
I kiss them reverently. Alas! I know
The pain I bear.

“Because of dear but close-shut, holy eyes
Of heaven’s own blue,
All little eyes do fill my own with tears
Whate’er their hue;
And motherly I gaze their innocent,
Clear depths into.

“Because of little pallid lips, which once
My name did call,
No childish voice in vain appeal upon
My ears doth fall;
I count it all my joy their joys to share
And sorrows small.

“Because of little dimpled hands which now
Close folded lie,
All little hands henceforth to me do have
A pleading cry;
I clasp them as they were small wandering birds
Lured home to fly.

“Because of little death-cold feet, for earth’s
Rough roads unmeet,
I’d journey leagues to save from sin or harm
Such little feet,
And count the lowliest service done for them
So sacred—sweet!”

I am sure that you have no intention of allowing your sorrow to hurt your own life. That is always the danger of sorrow, that in our grief and disappointment we lose something of our zest for life, something of our interest in doing God’s will. Your baby’s work is done, and God took him home. But your work is not

done, and your hand must not slack, even for sorrow.

COURAGE IN BEREAVEMENT

NOW in your time of bereavement, when a new set of cares comes to you, I want to keep very close to you and to help you by all that strong friendship can give and do. If you were nearer to me, that I could see you now and then, I would be very glad to help you in closer personal ways. But although you are far away, I want to help you in any way possible. Let me, therefore, assure you, first of all, of sincere sympathy and faithful remembrance. But do not forget, my child, that the burden which now rests upon you demands the very best that you have in yourself to give. That is to say, you must not get discouraged; you must not allow your loneliness to make you timid or to impair your energy. Now is the time for all the strength you have, the strength of your noble womanhood, the strength of Christ that is in you. Do not forget that if you are faithful yourself, in all ways, your Master will always stand beside you, and in loving helpfulness. Discouragement is fatal to strength. It makes one unfit for duty. You must never yield, therefore,

a moment to it. Indeed, you have no reason to yield to discouragement. You are young and strong, with a training for life which makes you valuable to others and makes your service also valuable. You will have no trouble in caring for yourself, while you are well and strong.

I know that this is not the most serious thing about your condition—I mean the necessity for work. That which is hardest for you is the loneliness. Loneliness is always a heavy burden. It also has its temptations—at least, it makes the life open to temptations of many kinds. You must try and master it as far as you can. Remember this—your husband's work was done and God called him away. You did your duty to him as a loyal and faithful wife most beautifully. Now your hands are free for other duty. One of Miss Havergal's poems is called "Free to Serve." It tells of a mother, I think, who had cared for a sick child for a long time, giving all her thought to it. The task was very hard and the burden heavy. At last the child was lifted out of her arms into the Good Shepherd's arms. The mother now felt the great burden of emptied hands. They had been so long used to helping, caring for her child, that, when there was nothing for them to do, they hung heavily at her side. Then came to her the inspiration that she was "free

to serve"; that is, her hands, which had been trained to all gentleness and delicate helpfulness in caring for her child so long, were now free—not to be idle, but to take up other work for the Master.

You will understand how this applies in your own case. Your hands are now "free to serve." You are not free to indulge in sad memories. Life waits for you and beckons you to large and noble service.

Just yesterday I clipped from a paper a little incident telling of "God's way with a soul." It tells of a woman who had a beautiful girlhood, rich in all that wealth and love could give. Trouble came by and by and everything was swept away—parents, husband, children, wealth. In her anguish she prayed for death, but death was refused to her. Everything was done by her friends to divert her mind, but to no effect. One night she had a dream. She had gone to heaven and saw her husband coming toward her. She ran to him full of joy. To her terror, no answering joy was shown in his face—only surprise and almost indignation.

"How did you come here?" he asked. "They did not say that you were to be sent for. I didn't expect you for a long time yet."

"But aren't you glad?" she cried.

Again he only answered as before, "How did

you come? I didn't expect you." And there was no gladness in his tone.

With a bitter cry she turned from him. "I am going to my parents," she faltered; "they, at least, will welcome me." So she went on until she found her parents. But instead of the tender love for which her heart was sick, she met only the same cold looks of amazement, the same astonished questions. Dazed and heart-broken she turned from them.

"I will go to my Saviour!" she cried. "He loves me if no one else does."

Then in her dream she reached the Saviour. She was right—there was no coldness there. But through his love the sorrow of his voice thrilled her into wondering silence. "Child, child, who is doing your work down there?"

At last she understood.

Be very careful of your life. But the best way to take care of one's life is to be very busy in doing the work which the Master gives one to do.

TO A MOTHER WHOSE CHILD HAS DIED SUDDENLY

IT seems very clear to me that from the beginning the brightness of heaven lay on your child's life, setting her apart for early translation. Evidently her life was too

frail, too ethereal, for earth. She was only lent to you for a little stay.

Another thing, my dear friend, there is not the least reason why you should chide yourself with any carelessness in the matter. How could you have been more careful than you were? Of course, if the physician had told you the contents of the pills or had marked the bottle so as to indicate their character, and you had then not taken due care, you might have blamed yourself. As it is, there is not a shadow of reason why you should chide or question yourself.

As I said before, her precious life was finished—that is all we know. What a blessed, beautiful life it was! What a ministry of good she wrought in your home, in your life! She left touches of benedictions in you which will be in your soul forever. Then, her work being done, she went home.

Think of her stay with you as of a visit of one of God's brightest angels from heaven to leave in your home and life holy memories and fragrances, and to speak God's sacred messages to your heart.

As to the manner of her departure, I would raise no questions. All efforts to reason through the logic of the tangle which your mind finds only makes the perplexity the sorer. You

know your heavenly Father neither does nor permits anything that harms one of his little ones. A doctor was negligent, and his negligence produces a sad result. God does not ordain negligence. Do not think that he does. He does not ordain sin. He ordains only beauty and fidelity.

But here is where God's wisdom and love come in. He takes men's mistakes, negligences, errors, even their sins, and out of all the confusion wrought by them he brings beauty.

Your child was taken away through the result of a physician's careless act, we will say; but she did not die a moment before God's time for her to go. Her work was done and the time allotted to her completed, and God came down and sweetly bore her away.

My dear friend, will you not bid your heart cease its questions and lie down in peace in the Father's bosom? I know you believe in God's love, and know that he has your darling in his own sweet keeping for you. What I ask you to do is simply to trust God and not question. It only makes your head ache to try to understand these things. Do not try—trust instead.

Of one thing you may be perfectly sure—you are absolutely free from all blame.

Will you not lift your eyes to God in sweet,

loving submission? Accept what has come as part of his grace, his will. Take your sorrow as a benediction. You are a young woman, with your life before you. You have a husband whose happiness and whose life's success depend upon you far more than you think. God has given you another precious child to train. Then you have friends and work for Christ in their behalf. God does not want you to faint and lie in the dust of your sorrow, but to rise up and do the sweet work that is yours.

TO A WIDOW

I DID not know your husband, but it has been a great delight to me to hear so much testimony to his noble character from those who knew him well. This testimony, from varied sources, is wonderfully concurrent—all uniting in painting a picture of him which is wonderfully like the Master's. Knowing him as you did, in all the intimacy of affection, which revealed to you all that was best and truest and manliest in him, you must have a precious legacy of sweet and inspiring memories. Death has a strange power. It shows our loved ones to us at their best, unveiling hitherto concealed beauties, gathering up almost forgotten recollections, bringing out into

clearer, fuller vividness features of tender loveliness, intensifying every line of strength and nobleness in the character, and then fixing in fadeless colors this complete portrait in our very soul, to stay there forever. Through all the experiences of your future, come what may, this ideal will abide with you and will be an inspiration, a benediction to your life. You can never lose this friend of your youth, this husband of your heart. Always will he be yours. Other friendships can never disturb this one. Other impressions made upon your life by other lives can never overlay nor dim this picture so sacredly enshrined. His going out of your sight only gave him to you in intenser reality and more precious closeness and more inseparable union, life with life.

Still the question comes now and ever will come, "Why was he taken away?" All that is now learned from so many sources of his influence as a Christian, of his power over other men, of his activity to do good and to be useful, makes this question the more clamorous for answer. We rest in our faith in God. I have read that the widow of Dr. Livingstone, when she looked upon her husband's body, brought back from Africa, said something like this: "There lies the body of my husband, my dearest earthly friend, my only earthly

support; but I cannot forget that there lies also the will of God." And in that will of God there was infinite love combined with infinite wisdom. I know you find peace in this same precious faith.

It is not wise for us to try to know why God takes away—God's ways are too high for us. Yet one truth is growing upon me as I go on—that we are not kept in this world so much for the little work we can do here, as to be trained for our real life work hereafter, in other spheres. We say, amid our tears, "Just when he seemed ready to become really useful and a blessing God took him away. How strange!" But is not the reason that the friend's work was not here, that he was only at school, in training, in this present life, and was taken away because he was ready to be really useful and a blessing? "His servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face." Your husband was trained here for the true serving, and then God called him home to give him his work somewhere in his wide, glorious kingdom, somewhere close to himself, under his own eye, where he can look into the Master's face as he serves.

I know you will rejoice, even in your loneliness and sorrow, in the blessedness and joy into which your husband has entered before you. Your work is yet in this world. Your

child needs you, and your ministry will be to train this little one for a sweet, beautiful life, and for heaven. May God strengthen you for this service. And may he comfort your heart in your sorrow. He is most gentle, and his hand binds up and heals—never breaks—the bruised reed.

Commit your life with its broken plans and shattered hopes into the hands that bear the nailmarks. He will so reshape and readjust it that nothing shall be lost, no plan fail, no hope wither, so that the crushed flowers may yet grow into fairer, sweeter beauty.

ON THE LOSS OF A FRIEND

YOUR sorrow is very tender, and yet it has about it a sweet sacredness which robs it of bitterness. The fact that your friend was so noble, so true, so beautiful in character, and so like his Master, makes your grief a memory of “whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely.” If he had not been a good man and a Christian your sorrow would be very bitter.

It is never best to try to explain sorrows. There is precious comfort, forever, for you, in the assurance that God has a plan for each life, and that his plan is not marred or broken

when a life fails to fulfill our plan for it. Your plan for his life was not realized. You had a beautiful vision of many years, years of noble development of character and of great usefulness. In that vision your own life blended, with its hopes and joys. That was your plan. But now the roses lie faded at your feet.

But God had a plan for his life—and for yours. “Every man is immortal until his work is done.” God’s plan was not shattered when death touched the life that was so dear to you. Nor was God’s plan for your life spoiled when this lovely vision faded. What remains is not what you hoped for. You loved him; he loved you; your lives became mutual benedictions. He left touches and impressions upon you which you will carry forever. You will be a different woman always for having loved and been loved. Now he is in heaven, but not with a broken life. He is living there the life begun here. Earthly life is but preparatory—a school, to fit us for the real life of eternity. You stay here, lonely now and desolate, but neither is your life a broken one in God’s sight. First, you were blessed with love, and your heart was warmed and thrilled. Then sorrow came, and sorrow is God’s messenger, one of God’s teachers sent to you. Love and sorrow are fitting you for service in this world.

God has some work for you to do, and he is preparing you for it.

Look at it in this way, will you not? Rise above the incidents of life and let your faith in God enable you to see all that I have been trying to picture to you. Take your life now as one doubly anointed by God for service. Do not let your loss overpower you or crush you. Lay the burden on him who is training you and leading you. Do not be afraid. Trust him and go sweetly on with your work.

Some people drop their tasks when sorrow comes. That is the saddest possible outcome of grief. Sorrow really is a new divine anointing and consecration to service. Seek now to know and strive to do all God's will for your life. Go out to be a comforter to others in their sorrow, since God has taught you the lesson in your experience. God is ready now to use you if you will but put yourself utterly into his hands.

LET GRIEF LEAD TO SERVICE

YOU are doing what is right by putting the whole matter into God's hands, and leaving it there, meanwhile keeping your own heart sweet, without bitterness, without resentment.

One of the sweetest paragraphs in your letter is what you say about your husband, that he was always true to the highest and the best. This makes your sorrow very much easier to bear. You have the comfort of knowing that he was a true man, that he was God's child, and that he has only passed into a larger life, there to live, remembering you and loving you just as tenderly as he did while he was here with you. Some day you will have him with you again.

I remember Bickersteth's poem. I read it when it first came out many years ago. I have not seen the book for a long time. In thinking of certain things in this book which you say you cannot quite believe, please remember that the book is poetry. Then remember also that Bickersteth's view of the future life is not one which presents the most comfort to Christians in thinking of those who have passed away. I prefer to take the Scriptural view, as it is set forth in the words of Christ himself, and also in the words of Paul. I am glad that your mind does not give hospitality to the doubts and fears which are suggested in much of our recent literature.

No doubt there is mystery about the future. It is easy to raise questions and even to start doubts. In these days there is a school of professedly Christian men who

are trying to take from us everything of the supernatural in our religion, including the deity of Christ and his resurrection. Let me say to you once for all, my dear child, that such iconoclasm is utterly without ground or foundation. Let us cling to the simple teaching of the holy Scripture. At the very most these doubts and speculations are the thoughts of men who set aside entirely the words of Christ, ignoring them. We believe in Christ and in his words, and this is where our hope and joy are.

You ask me what you should do. You say you cannot seem to get your feet on the foundation. All you can do is to creep into the arms of Christ and rest yourself in his eternal love. You cannot understand things, you cannot find out things that you would like to find out about the future. You will have to go on for a little while in the mists, as far as the future world is concerned. But if you trust implicitly, unquestioningly, then Christ will help you in your life.

Let me suggest to you that you do not allow your mind to run quite so much in the tracks which it has been making for itself during the last year. I am not trying to make you think less of him who has gone, but I am sure that if he could speak to you to-day he would bid you to have no anxiety or fear about him,

but to devote your life to unfailing service for Christ. Do not doubt the teaching of immortality. I must not enter into any discussion of this question with you now, but I want to help you to cling to the truth, and I assure you nothing could be surer. Christ's own words are enough, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." When he has spoken there is no more room for doubt; his word is sure—it must not be doubted.

A good woman in Philadelphia lost her husband by death. He died away from home—suddenly, in a hotel where he was stopping. They had been married about three years. She was almost like a baby in her clinging to him and her dependence upon him. I did not know her then, but after her husband's funeral she came to me to find comfort. I took her into my heart as a little child, and tried to do what I could to help her into the light. She was not a Christian and did not know anything about Christ. I taught her the story of Christ's love as simply as I could, and led her to devote herself to him as her Saviour and her Friend. Then I tried to lead her into such activity as I knew would be the best course for her. She united with the church of her choice in a few weeks, and in the following September took a class of little girls in the Sunday school there and gave herself up with the sweetest devotion to

teaching and helping them. I also gave her some women to visit, women who needed just the help that her sweet young life could take to them. One of them was an old woman, poor and lonely. The others were women with needs and sorrows of different kinds who would be helped by her sympathy and by her love. She visited these women from time to time and devoted herself to her church life. To-day, after three years of such experience, she is one of the dearest, most beautiful, and most helpful women I know. Her grief, instead of spending itself in tears and questions, was turned into paths of service, and in helping others she found the help that she herself most needed. Let me suggest to you that in the care of your children and in your other duties which come to you in your home, and in whatever else you may be able to do for Christ and for his needy ones, you will find the comfort you seek.

Find new paths now, paths out of the valley, away from the shadows, paths that lie in the sunlight. Think of your babies and live for them. Do not forget for a moment that the reason God left you behind when he called your husband away was that you had a work yet to do, because you could not be spared from this earth. Do not disappoint the Master by failing to do in any sense what he wants you to do for his glory.

THE END WILL BE GLORIOUS

IT is impossible to follow out all the windings of experiences and circumstances in trying to apply God's promise regarding prayer. I shall not attempt to go into the question which we talked about so fully the other day. I only wish in a few lines to impress the one point—that you trust absolutely in God's goodness, love, grace, wisdom and power, and commit to his hands and for his working out all the questions and perplexities and uncertainties which have made the burden of these weeks so heavy for you. There is not the least shadow of doubt that ultimate and perfect good will come out of the experiences through which you have been passing during the last months. You had your dreams for your child, and they were beautiful dreams. We begin dreaming dreams for our children before they are born. When they come into our hand we continue dreaming dreams, making plans for them, cherishing hopes, looking forward to the great things we expect them to reach. I know well what this means in every father's and mother's heart. Then comes, as in your case, the cutting off of the earthly life of the child, and it seems to us in the first shock of our dis-

appointment that all is gone, that all the dreams have failed, that all the expectations and hopes have withered. This would be true if life ended with what we call death. But the fact is, that death is not the end but the beginning of everything beautiful. Your child passed through the gate and out of your sight, but her life is going on just as really, and far more fully and beautifully and richly beyond the gate.

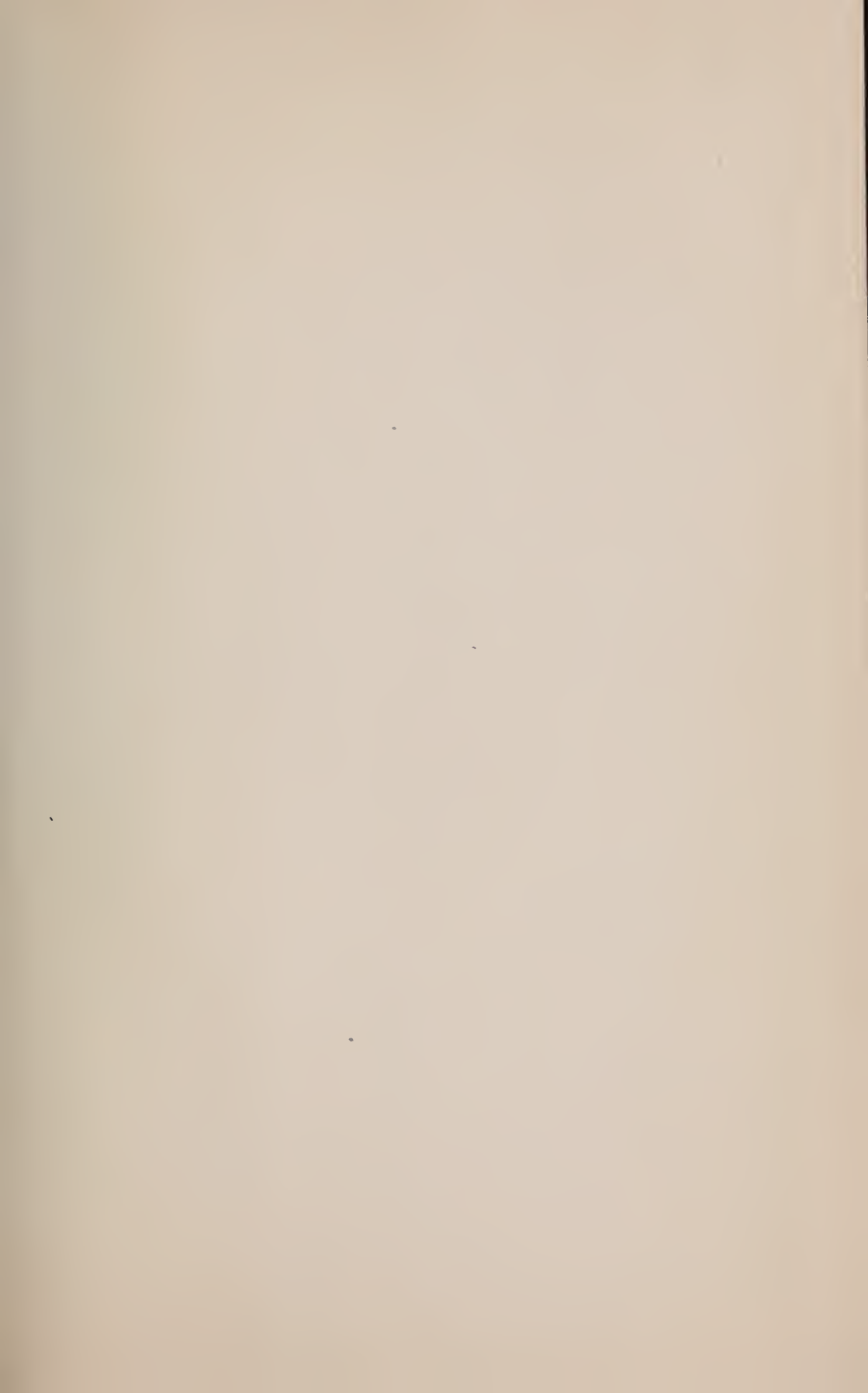
Of the dreams which you have been dreaming all along, not one has faded or failed you. Every one of them is being realized in that sweeter summer, in that more beautiful home on the other side. Immortality gives us a field in which everything we have thought about and looked for will have abundant time to ripen and develop. I like the phrase in the New Testament, "The power of an endless life." The words are wonderfully suggestive. The thought of the endless life gives meaning to all that is beautiful and good in life that seems so short to us on this side. You will think of this—will you not? The short years which were lived here by your beloved one were just the beginnings of the endless years. There will be time in this immortality for the development of everything beautiful to its richest and fullest. Love means far more when we think of its

going on forever. Think what your influences and teaching have meant to your child in view of the endlessness of the life into which she has entered.

I know how your heart keeps asking why's, even in your strongest faith, in the midst of your trust. We do not know why. But it is a great comfort to be able to trust and to be sure that somehow it is all right. Your son did not die too soon. He finished his life according to God's plan for it. You remember that Jesus lived only thirty-three years and then said, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Do not think of George's life as only a fragment, an unfinished life. It was complete as God saw it. Remember he is living yet; he is going on with his work in the other world.

It seems to me that there is wonderful comfort in this for your heart as you think of the unfinished things he left. A friend of mine, a young man, left a letter halfway written on his desk, his pen stopping at the middle of a word. He never came back to finish it. It seemed to me a beautiful picture of all life when we leave this world. It is just a great mesh of half-finished things, as we drop it, because in death we only go on to take up the next day in the other world what we were doing

here. We will begin next morning just where we left off here when God calls us away. God is in all of it, and the end will be glorious when we come to the other side.



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